


## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 1654  
**Submitted by:**   
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**Submitter Comments:**

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes to education legislation, particularly the changes focusing on mandating adherence to a standardised curriculum.

As a parent of two neurodivergent children, one with significant learning disabilities (severe dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia), I initially chose to homeschool for the flexibility that it allowed.

My eldest daughter was falling through the cracks in the school system. She went to school from Prep, through to Grade 8, but due to her learning disabilities, she was unable to keep up with the class. Each year of schooling widened the gap between her and the rest of her peers. Her teachers tried their best, but it was impossible for them to be able to teach twenty-plus children, the same content at completely individualised levels. Every report card my daughter brought home had top marks awarded for effort but a fail for each subject. I went to the school constantly and was advised to get assessments, which I got. All the assessments made multiple recommendations that all sounded great in theory but seemed impossible to implement in practice. I ended up paying for weekly tutoring outside of school hours, but by the time we got to tutoring, she was often too tired and overwhelmed from a whole day at school to be able to focus on it.

In high school, she ended up on an Individual Curriculum Plan. I hoped it would help, but often her teachers would forget to bring in adjusted work for her to do. They also didn't have the time to sit with her for hours explaining concepts at a much more basic level than the majority of the class was doing, so they would give her worksheets that were well below her learning level (for example, Prep and Grade 1 worksheets when she was in Grade 8, and probably working at a Grade 3/4 level). These worksheets were too easy for her, but it meant she could do them independently, so while the class did algebra, she would sit in the corner counting farm animals. For her to be given worksheets at her actual ability level would have meant the teacher sitting with her and teaching her the new concepts, and of course, they didn't have the time for that.

She went from a young child who loved school and always tried her hardest (despite the challenges) to a teenager who locked herself in the bathroom before school and had completely stopped trying. She no longer had confidence in herself or her abilities, and believed that she was “dumb”, “useless”, and “a drain”. She once asked me, what was the sense in trying, as she would ultimately fail anyway.

After nine years of her failing every subject, and becoming a shell of herself, I finally decided to homeschool. The results have been amazing. We have not followed the curriculum as initially, she was reluctant to do any kind of formal schoolwork, believing that she wasn't capable of it. So, we focused on building up her confidence. We did baking and board games to teach her the basics of measurement and money that she had missed. We read books for fun, and she wrote letters to friends in order to practice writing and spelling. Within a year, she went from being a girl who avoided anything to do with numbers, reading and writing to teaching herself high school-level chemistry.

At school, all day, every day, she was pitted up against her peers, and against a standardised measure of achievement, which showed her that she was failing. Once she was given the flexibility to learn in a way that suited her, and without the time pressures applied at school, she could learn; she just needed a lot more time. Each chemistry lesson that she did, she would go over a minimum of four times. The first time was just to take it in. The second time, she would write down words and meanings she didn't know and work out what they meant. The third, she would transcribe the content. The fourth, she would add notes for clarity and do the quizzes. She would go over and over, doing the quizzes as many times as it took for her to pass. One high school chemistry lesson, that might usually be taught at school in a single session, could take her up to a week to learn. But she learnt it, eventually.

We still battle daily with her confidence. When she comes up against challenges, she can be very quick to believe that trying will only result in failure—after all, that is what was demonstrated to her over and over again while at school. But we are slowly building up her self-esteem. Due to her disabilities and her issues with working memory and processing speed, she would never be able to do the full curriculum—it would take her far too long. But we are ensuring that she has enough of a stable base to be able to get by in life. We focus on the things

that really matter, the basics, and then allow her to let her passions dictate the rest so that she can find interests that she wants to learn, like chemistry.

These new regulations would restrict the flexibility and the freedom to have a completely individualised learning plan, that so many children—particularly those with neurodivergence, learning struggles/disabilities, mental health issues, and giftedness—need in order to thrive. By imposing rigid requirements, we risk children, like my own, failing to discover their potential, and becoming despondent and checked out of learning altogether.

I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and continue to allow for families to provide individualised high-quality learning for their children.

Thank you for considering my concerns.