

# GOOD TEACHING

Inclusive Schools  
– Disability Focus



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**Publication Details**

Department of Education  
GPO Box 169  
HOBART TAS 7000  
web: [www.education.tas.gov.au](http://www.education.tas.gov.au)

Published: September 2014

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# MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY

As reflected in the Department of Education's (DoE) *Learners First Strategy 2014-17*, equity is a value we hold highly; we all have the right to challenging and engaging learning opportunities in appropriate settings. The *Respectful Schools and Workplaces* framework outlines the priorities and strategies we are implementing that will contribute to safe and inclusive learning and working environments throughout our department.

Tasmanian schools have long been recognised as leading the way in implementing inclusive practice in our schools. This document reaffirms good practice supported by evidence-based contemporary thinking.

The DoE is committed to enabling all students to achieve quality outcomes through their participation in an inclusive, high quality education system that is responsive to their needs through appropriate access and participation in the *Australian Curriculum*. DoE strategies focus on building the capacity of our people and our resources to better support the diverse and unique needs of all students, including those with disability.

To help drive this work, in late 2013, the DoE established an Inclusion Working Group focusing on disability. Together with key stakeholders from around the state the Working Group has investigated better ways to support schools, students and parents in being inclusive school communities. Whilst undertaking this focus work on inclusion of students with disability, the Working Group has ensured no other equity groups were excluded in the process.

The Working Group met five times and formulated advice and strategic direction to school communities on how to build inclusive school communities. This group is committed to making our schools a better place for all our students and I thank them for their work.

The Working Group addressed the following key strategies in inclusive education:

- Improved teaching quality and support
- A robust national curriculum
- Better support for students
- A greater say for school communities and improved information for parents, schools and community.

This resource has been developed to support everyone in our schools to continue to learn and reach their potential to lead fulfilling and productive lives and to contribute positively to the community. The resource is grounded in the Tasmanian context and is consistent with our *Learners First* values of learning, excellence, equity, respect and relationships.

I am pleased to provide this resource to school communities as a summary of the Working Group's findings and discussion around these strategies.

*Inclusive education is concerned, in particular, with meeting the learning needs of students with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. It enables students to engage meaningfully with the curriculum and facilitates the best educational outcomes for all students.*" (UNESCO, 1994, cited in Aniftos & McLuskie, 2003, p1)

**Colin Pettit**  
**Secretary**



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## Acknowledgements

This resource has been informed by representatives from:

- Department of Education
- Tasmanian Principals' Association
- Australian Education Union
- Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations
- Autism Tasmania
- Office of the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
- Australian Association of Special Education Inc (AASE)
- Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID)
- Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc (TasCOSS)



# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

## Supporting professional learning

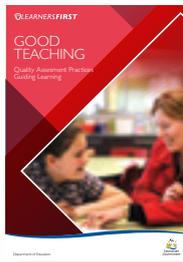
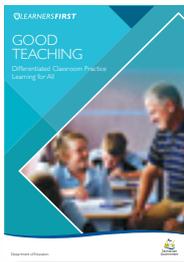
**LEARNERSFIRST**

Our *Learners First* Strategy aims to develop successful, skilled and innovative Tasmanians. Its values include learning and excellence so that Tasmanians are engaged in positive, productive and supported learning experiences, and have high expectations and a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence. Through *Learners First* the department is committed to building inclusive school communities with a focus on supporting student need.

This publication has been developed for teachers as a practical support resource. In addition it is designed to inform the work of school leaders as they implement school improvement plans and support quality teaching practices. It forms part of a *Good Teaching* suite of resources that also includes:



**Good Teaching:**  
*A Guide for Staff Discussion*



**Good Teaching: Differentiated Classroom Practice**  
– *Learning for All*

**Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning**  
– *Planning for Learning*

**Good Teaching: Quality Assessment Practices**  
– *Guiding Learning*



**Good Teaching: Inclusive Schools**  
– *Disability Focus*

**Good Teaching: Inclusive Schools**  
– *Diversity Focus*

It should also be used in conjunction with:

**Supporting Literacy and Numeracy Success** which provides teachers with strategies for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes as they plan using curriculum documents.

**Respectful Schools Respectful Behaviour** which highlights the importance of providing safe and supportive environments as a vital part of quality teaching and learning.

Practical examples are provided using the following identifiers:



Inclusive  
Leaders



Inclusive  
Teachers



Good  
Practice



Video



Tool



Resources



Conversation  
Starters

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Teaching Quality and Support

## *Learners First Strategy 2014–17*

### **Successful Learners:**

*Empower our people by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need.*

## *Respectful schools and workplaces*

*Staff are supported to deliver exciting and innovative learning opportunities that are inclusive and based on mutual respect.*

## Key Messages

Inclusive schools demonstrate respect and support for diversity through the school's inclusive beliefs, actions and structures.

In these schools everyone is welcome, has a sense of belonging and is engaged in respectful learning experiences.

These schools are committed to improving student learning outcomes by building teacher understandings and practice. Ongoing conversations and collaborations stimulate deep reflection and inquiry.

Professional learning is well planned, aligns with school improvement targets and builds teacher capacity.

Inclusive schools place learning at the centre of planning and ensure there is optimal use made of the diverse and flexible *Australian Curriculum*.

*“Inclusive education is more than merely being physically present in a general education classroom, it is embedded in an interrelated set of values from which we make decisions to support equitable and appropriate education”*  
**(Doyle and Giangreco 2011).**

## Our Schools

Tasmanian Government schools enable students from all backgrounds, full access to inclusive learning experiences, environments and quality curriculum.

Every school has a school support teacher to help build the capacity of the school through providing knowledge and skills. These teachers support the development of student learning plans in consultation with the student, their families, class teachers and relevant specialists. Further specialist support is also available for students with specific needs such as psychological support needs or assistance with communication, mobility or behavioural challenges.

All Tasmanian Government school staff are required to meet their obligations as outlined in the *Disability Standards for Education (DSE)*. An overwhelming majority of staff have completed interactive online DSE modules and increased awareness of their role to further improve access, participation and success for students with disability.

To support the learning of teachers and students, targeted resources with accompanying professional learning opportunities have been developed. In particular, the guide and online support material for *Differentiated Classroom Practice*, provides information and strategies for teachers when making adjustments for a range of learners, including students with disability.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Teaching Quality and Support



## Inclusive leaders:

- value and actively celebrate diverse backgrounds, interests, cultures and abilities through networks and learning programs
- develop a path for school improvement in line with goals to inform and facilitate staff connections with professional learning opportunities
- cultivate the development of positive relationships amongst staff, students and families to support learning success
- build staff knowledge and capacity around student needs and mobilise or adjust resources accordingly
- use DoE systems to assist in monitoring school improvement
- implement relevant policy and legislation to develop school-wide teaching programs that support the participation and learning of students with disability.



## Inclusive teachers:

- welcome and support diverse learners across a full range of abilities and backgrounds
- know who can be consulted to increase their knowledge of students
- build effective partnerships and collaborate with families and specialist staff for the benefit of the students
- have high expectations for all their students and provide timely, constructive feedback
- design meaningful learning activities by building on students' strengths and interests to target goals while addressing individual learning needs
- understand that different students need different adjustments and differentiate their teaching and learning programs accordingly
- create positive learning environments
- use evidence-based approaches
- expand their professional skills and understanding of how students learn.



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR SCHOOLS...

- **What does our school do well in addressing improved teaching quality and support?**
- **How are the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students reflected in our school?**
- **How does our school leadership give priority to inclusion and consistently promote an ethos of achievement, empowerment, and engagement for all students?**
- **How can we implement inclusive values and behaviours to be central to the achievement of high-quality education for all students?**



## Recommended Resource links

Teacher Assistant Supports in Inclusive Schools: Research, Practices and Alternatives  
<http://www.uvm.edu>

Australian Association of Special Education Inc. Position Paper – Teacher Aides  
<http://aase.edu.au>

A Student with a Disability Has the Same Rights as any Other  
<http://aase.edu.au>

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Teaching Quality and Support



## *Disability Standards for Education - eLearning*



Inclusive schools demonstrate respect and support for student diversity through the school's inclusive actions and structures.

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE)* clarify the legal obligations for the work of all staff. The Standards provide a framework for students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

The DSE specifies how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disability. They cover the following areas:

- enrolment
- participation
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Each area includes a statement of the:

- **rights**, or entitlements, of students with disabilities in relation to education and training, consistent with the rights of the rest of the community.
- **obligations**, or responsibilities, of educational authorities, institutions and other education providers. These are the Standards with which education providers must comply.
- **measures** that, if implemented, will be evidence of compliance with the legal obligation. The measures are examples of compliant actions and are performance based.

All school staff are required to meet their obligations as outlined in the *Disability Standards for Education* in their work. Online, interactive professional learning modules are available for all staff at: <http://dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/> (the registration key is **tas-det**).

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Teaching Quality and Support

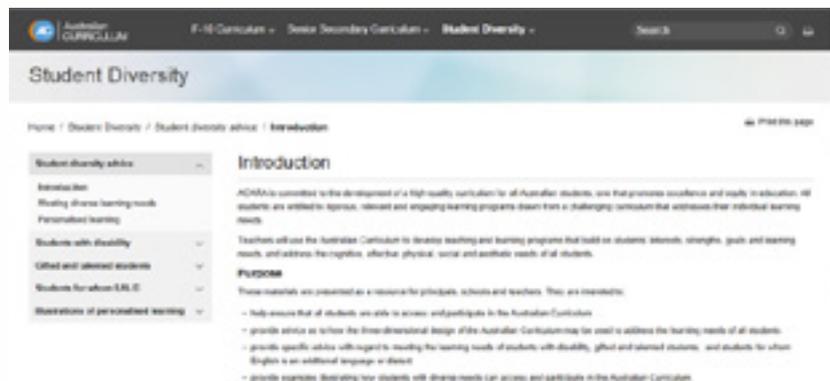
## Australian Curriculum

Inclusive schools enable all students with disability to access appropriate teaching and learning programs within the *Australian Curriculum* on the same basis as their peers.

All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that address their individual learning needs. Teachers use the *Australian Curriculum* to develop teaching and learning programs that build on student's strengths, interests, goals and learning needs through Individual Education Plans.

The department's guidelines on developing Individual Education Plans are available from:

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Guidelines-for-Individual-Education-Planning-Students-with-Disability.pdf>



Illustrations of personalised learning promote equity of access to the *Australian Curriculum* for all students.  
<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/StudentDiversity/Illustrations-of-personalised-learning>



# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum

## *Learners First Strategy 2014–17*

### **Successful Learners:**

*Engage and retain students through creative, innovative and supportive learning programs and environments.*

## *Respectful schools and workplaces*

*Staff are supported to deliver exciting and innovative learning opportunities that are inclusive and based on mutual respect.*

## Key Messages

The *Australian Curriculum* is a quality national curriculum inclusive of all learners. It is firmly based on the proposition that all students can learn and their needs are important.

It is a web-based three dimensional curriculum for students from Prep to Year 12. The curriculum is organised into core learning areas with seven general capabilities and three cross curriculum priorities that contribute to each learning area.

The overall design and online format of the framework offers flexibility in viewing and adjusting to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Through a focus on the Literacy, Numeracy, Personal and Social General Capabilities, teachers can personalise learning to suit individual student learning needs. Additional levels have been developed for these capabilities. The literacy continuum begins with a description of skills and understanding for students with a pre-intentional level of communication.

To further support personalised planning for a broad range of learners, teachers can access diversity support materials that are hosted on the *Australian Curriculum* website.

## Our Schools

Implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* in the areas of English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography occurred in all Tasmanian schools throughout 2013 and 2014.

For students with disability, their strengths, interests, needs and individual learning goals linked to the curriculum, are detailed in an Individual Education Plan.

Individual Education Plans are the product of a collaborative process involving the student (wherever possible), the student's family or carers, teachers, and any relevant specialist(s).

Teachers planning for students with disability begin with the student's Individual Education Plan and learning area content that aligns with the student's school year level. Adjustments are then made to curriculum content, teaching strategies and learning environments to minimise barriers and maximise learning outcomes.

Learning experiences are differentiated to meet each student's needs and to promote equitable access to excellence.

To support their work in personalising learning, teachers are encouraged to actively work with colleagues including their school support teacher and relevant specialist support staff.

For early childhood educators, the *Early Years Learning Framework* provides the foundation for young children to maximise their potential through play-based learning; recognising the importance of communication and language and social and emotional development.

*"All students deserve equitable access to an engaging and rigorous curriculum"*  
**(Tomlinson and Javius, 2012)**

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum



## Inclusive leaders:

- are committed to a *Learners First* orientation in profiling, planning, supporting and reviewing learning
- set high expectations for learning with consistent and clear systems and processes
- are expected to build opportunities for teachers to partner with students and families about students' learning
- facilitate collaborative problem solving relationships amongst staff to develop, implement and review learning experiences
- lead a whole school approach to inclusivity through environments both physical and affective and supports learning programs that celebrate diversity
- ensure high quality teaching by promoting lifelong teacher learning and development
- facilitate the development of teacher knowledge and understanding in relation to the structure of the curriculum frameworks, with a focus on what students are expected to know, understand and are able to do
- promote the design of learning experiences with a differentiation mindset.



## Inclusive teachers:

- know that all students are capable of learning
- are familiar with and utilise curricular content including the *Australian Curriculum* general capabilities
- actively partner with students and encourage collaboration in developing engaging and challenging learning experiences
- work to ensure that learning is differentiated so that all students are appropriately challenged in meaningful learning experiences
- give students opportunities to have a say in how education is experienced by allowing them choice in some elements of learning
- provide appropriate physical surroundings to assist students build self-esteem and resilience
- consult with parents and students regarding adjustments to learning experiences
- closely monitor student progress and shift adjustments as needed
- communicate information on students' progress to parents and families.



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR SCHOOLS...

- **What does our school do well in providing a robust national curriculum for all students?**
- **How do we make a curriculum inclusive and adapt the curriculum, not the learner, so that all learners are able to participate in the learning in our school?**
- **How can every student be supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning in our school?**
- **How do we build an effective and inclusive school that understands that students' developmental needs are best promoted through a collaborative approach and by focusing on the individual student's learning?**

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum

## Developing Individual Education Plans

### What is an Individual Education Plan?

- The Individual Education Plan (IEP) describes important information and priority learning goals to be achieved by a student. It also defines the kinds of adjustments suited to optimise learning and how the student can best demonstrate their understandings.
- IEPs are the product of partnerships with key stakeholders, including the student wherever possible.
- The purpose of collaborative IEP partnerships is to continuously gain better insights into the student as an individual, and how best to personalise learning to suit their aspirations, growth and needs.
- Information and strategies specified in the IEP work best when stated clearly and are readily understood by all contributors.
- Learning goals and adjustments listed in an IEP are specific to the student and their unique learning pathway and may not reflect the range of adjustments made to differentiate classroom practice as part of good teaching.
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLP) are similar to IEPs and are also used in Tasmanian Government schools as a written plan used to describe, document, monitor, review and report on the student's education program, educational adjustments and learning outcomes.

### Refining Learning Goals

From the IEP planning discussions, three priorities, called key outcomes, are usually established. They are big picture goals underpinning the student's learning.

- Key outcomes represent broad priorities which can also be regarded as throughlines across learning areas. These form the basis for planning at the classroom and curriculum level.
- Key outcomes, together with information on where the student is up to in their learning, give teachers a picture of what learning experiences to plan for next.

The next step in the process is creating more specific learning goals that are measurable, attainable and time-bound. These are referred to as SMART goals. SMART goals are linked to a curriculum context, either an aspect of content from a year level learning area or a general capability, relative to which aspect of learning is being prioritised and what is most meaningful for the student.

- The amount of detail, level of support and adjustments described within the IEP will depend on the student and their needs.
- Effective IEPs are plans that have been co-constructed in light of home, school and classroom contexts.
- They are learner-centred and reviewed at key intervals.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum

## Developing Individual Education Plans



### Meet Alex

The following example introduces Alex and shows the process Alex's teacher uses within the *Australian Curriculum* to adjust the learning content and product in a Science inquiry – specifically for him or in line with his IEP.

Alex is thirteen and in Year 7. He enjoys his Nintendo Game Boy, Pokemon characters and spending time with his young nephew. When at school he needs constant attention and monitoring by his teacher. He has been diagnosed with severe anxiety and pervasive developmental disorder and is taking daily medication. By the time Alex was in Year 3 he was identified as having significant concentration and interpersonal problems with frequent exits from class for unruly behaviours. He has difficulty working for longer than 15 minutes. He tends to lose focus, resist work and wanders around. He generally does well during hands-on activities and projects with some verbal prompting, re-direction and positive reinforcement.

Alex has many gaps in his learning and following consultation with him, his family and teachers, an IEP has been developed. He is working towards his IEP goals in subjects such as English, Maths, Science and History. In subjects like Health and Physical Education and Materials Design and Technology he is working towards the Learning Area Achievement Standards.

Alex's understandings and skills are well below the expectations as described in the Achievement Standards for Year 7. He is working towards a SMART goal on building his academic language and some learning area concepts. The science teacher is developing a unit of work on how the sustainable use of resources depends on the way they are formed and cycle through earth systems. With Alex in mind the teacher:

Identifies access points from within the content at Year 7 or from a lower year level or from the general capabilities – in this instance there are opportunities for Alex to develop an understanding of the water cycle.

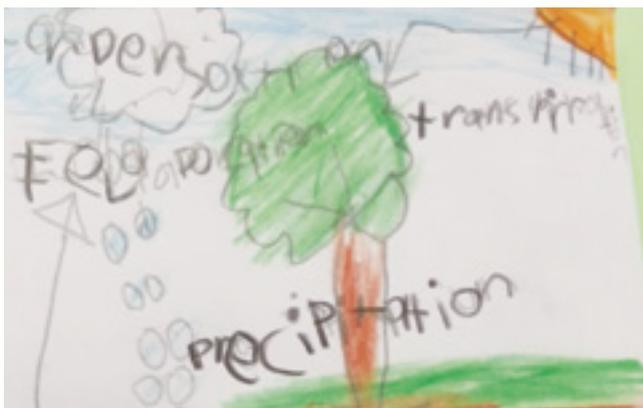


Provides adjustments to curriculum content and provides resources to engage and appropriately challenge Alex



Assesses the evidence of his learning against SMART goals as set out in Alex's IEP

This work sample shows Alex's evidence of learning where he uses scientific language and a diagram illustration to depict the water cycle.



# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum

## Developing Individual Education Plans



### Inclusive leaders:

- promote the value of diversity and differentiated classroom practice amongst teaching staff and the school community
- support staff in developing, implementing and reviewing Individual Education Plans (IEP) with an outcome focus
- make deliberate and strategic use of student, family and staff relationships and expertise to develop teams with significant knowledge of the student
- ensure processes are in place to support ongoing collaboration and communication of learning goals and needs detailed in the student's IEP
- actively seek to ensure resources are mobilised to promote learner engagement and support as detailed in the student's IEP
- know that IEPs are instrumental in developing an holistic understanding of the student; their strengths, interests and needs in readiness for developing personalised learning programs
- lead the development of purposeful IEPs from DoE guidelines and support resources that outline the requirements and demonstrate the key aspects of valued plans.



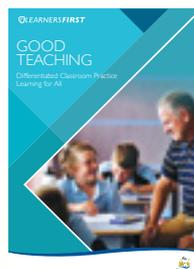
### Inclusive teachers:

- begin planning for students with disability by becoming familiar with the student in an holistic way
- recognise that the student and their family are integral partners in the student's education
- develop IEPs in collaboration with all key stakeholders
- plan from valued life outcomes expressed by the student and/or their family, framed as key outcomes
- devise SMART goals that align with and optimise achievement of the key outcomes
- embed SMART goals in the *Australian Curriculum* or mandated curriculum frameworks
- identify opportunities to personalise learning using the student's strengths, interests and/or preferred mode of learning
- continuously monitor and respond to the student's needs as they change
- refine the student's IEP as needs change and goals are met
- maintain ongoing consultation with the student, parents and support staff in relation to providing appropriate learning experiences.



### Resources and online learning to develop understandings and promote best practice

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/intranet>



# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: A Robust National Curriculum



**An extract from an IEP reflecting the student's learning goals and links to the Australian Curriculum.**

## Key Outcome 1: To increase his functional literacy.

What we currently see	SMART Goals (Link to Australian Curriculum)	Strategies and Adjustments Specific to particular subject
Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Angus can hold a pencil with tripod grip. He can write recognisable letters and numbers but usually reverses: 2, 3, 7, 9.</li> <li>Angus is able to write with left to right directionality and leave spaces between words.</li> </ul>	By the end of Term 1 Angus will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce the lower case letters a, o, d, g, q (anti-clockwise letters) with correct letter formation and line placement. (ACELY1653)</li> <li>Write a simple sentence about a familiar event or object using a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end and consistently leaving spaces between words. (ACELY1650)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide templates, hand-over-hand instruction, verbal prompts and visual aids (alphabet chart on table top) to practice and remind correct letter formations.</li> <li>Use a variety of equipment/materials that will reduce/ eliminate the labour of handwriting e.g. computer, letter blocks, sentence maker, scribe, joint writing</li> </ul>

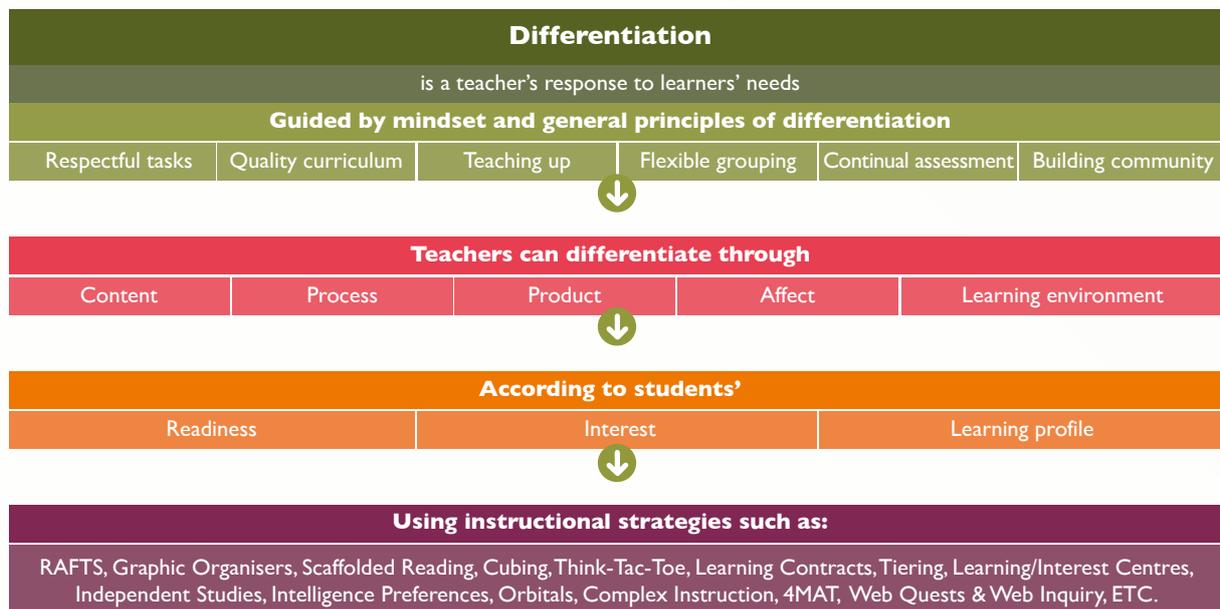
### Web link to the IEP guidelines:

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Guidelines-for-Individual-Education-Planning-Students-with-Disability.pdf>

### What is differentiation?

Differentiation is based on knowing students well as individuals and in terms of where they are up to in their learning, then acting responsively to their needs. Differentiated practice is a way of ensuring that every student is engaged and learning successfully. To differentiate, teachers can make adjustments to aspects of teaching and learning including: curriculum content and resources, teaching strategies, assessment, and learning environments. It is recognised that some students require significant adjustments to their learning program if they are to be engaged and challenged.

The process of differentiated practice is depicted in the flow chart below by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2010) and elaborated further in the DoE resources *Good Teaching – Differentiated Classroom Practice* booklet and associated online resource.



# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Better Support for Students

## *Learners First Strategy 2014–17*

### **Successful Learners:**

*Provide resources, facilities and infrastructure that support dynamic learning and teaching and business practices.*

## *Respectful schools and workplaces*

*Facilitate capacity building approaches in schools which enable students of all ability and learning need to participate successfully in the curriculum, prioritising literacy and numeracy.*

## Key Messages

With other states and territories, Tasmania is moving towards a nationally consistent approach to identifying and funding students with disability. By 2016, students will be supported on the basis of the educational adjustments required to meet individual learning needs.

National schooling reforms are focused on supporting students to achieve quality education outcomes through participation in an inclusive, high quality education system that is responsive to their needs.

The fundamental values of social justice, inclusion and democratic rights underpin the principle belief that all students are valued and included in our schools.

An inclusive education considers all students as learners with diverse needs but equal rights.

School leaders and teachers need to make choices about which supports or strategies to use on the basis of the latest evidence-based research and advice from school support staff.

Inclusive schools use resources broadly and flexibly to meet the varied teaching and learning needs of students.

Professor Michael Giangreco from the University of Vermont has undertaken research over many years in the area of effective use of resources in inclusive schooling. His findings note that a majority of special needs funding is aligned to teacher assistant employment, however alternative resourced provisions need to be considered to improve students' learning outcomes.

## Our Schools

Students with disability are encouraged and supported to attend their local government school. Schools can assist students with a range of specialist services and resources.

An appropriate range of supports is provided in Tasmanian Government schools to support all learners.

In each school there is a support teacher and a range of support specialists available to help build capacity and dedicate expertise to supporting students with disability.

Each Learning Service in the state has a team of specialist staff such as social workers, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists and autism consultants.

Respectful Schools Support Teams provide a focus on developing and embedding school wide positive behaviour approaches and building staff capacity regarding educational adjustments using the *Australian Curriculum* and building inclusive cultures and communities. There is one team based in each Learning Service consisting of a School Psychologist, a Behavioural Learning Leader and a Teacher Learning Leader.

In-school support measures range from highly specialised provisions (e.g. assistive technology) to more natural supports such as differentiated teaching materials and strategies.

The *Good Teaching – Differentiated Classroom Practice* resource provides a framework for Tasmanian Government school teachers to help plan and deliver differentiated learning experiences for all students, including students with disability.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Better Support for Students



## Inclusive leaders:

- are not afraid to say 'yes' to something different and are actively engaged in pushing for innovative solutions to issues that exclude particular learner groups
- use data from DoE systems and reports to develop whole-school approaches to better support students
- use evidence-based research to develop deep understandings of student need and strategies that work
- employ early identification and intervention measures for students who need or could benefit from additional support
- allocate budgets and provide resources to support student need
- make informed judgements of what is going well, identify gaps and seek positive solutions
- foster respect across the whole school community
- build trust and distribute leadership through teams and working co-operatively
- recognise that inclusion in education is one aspect of an inclusive society
- model and actively promote inclusive behaviours.



## Inclusive teachers:

- value all students equally and are committed to equitable access and excellence
- utilise the expertise of support staff to work collaboratively for improved student outcomes
- know their students well and personalise programs in response to students' strengths, needs and interests
- create effective learning environments with available resources
- engage in professional learning to enhance their knowledge and expertise.
- ensure compliance with legislation and DoE policies and guidelines.

*"By defining the problem positively, by providing classroom-based support, by maintaining ongoing communication, and by building peer-support networks, we can create an educational setting that positively and successfully includes all our students".*  
**(Dalheim 1994)**



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR SCHOOLS...

- **What is our school doing well to provide better support for all students?**
- **What do we need to do to achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate in our school?**
- **How do we get staff and students in our school to value diversity and to demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society?**
- **At our school, how do we improve outcomes for students at risk where all stakeholders work to identify and remove barriers and actively seek to create the conditions needed for student success?**



## Recommended Resource links

- Guidelines for Inclusive Language <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/>
- Principals of Inclusive Schools Great Urban Schools: Learning Together Builds Strong Communities <http://www.urbanschools.org/>

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Better Support for Students

## In inclusive schools:

- The fundamental values of social justice, social inclusion and democratic rights underpin the principle belief that all students are valued and included in our schools.
- All students are considered as learners with equal rights but with a diversity of needs.
- Successful inclusive practice is underpinned by ethical leadership.



## Evidence-based practice

The use of evidence-based practices in all classrooms relies on scientific research that underpins policies and practices in both regular and special education.

Teachers have a wide range of interventions and therapies available to them, all claimed to improve educational outcomes. Teachers, schools and education authorities need to make choices about which interventions to use and who to use them with. Many interventions are marketed with extravagant claims, while others have a solid research base and have been shown to support student learning.

How do teachers decide the most appropriate programs and interventions for students with disability?

- Decisions about the effectiveness of educational practices should rest on scientific evidence.
- Teachers and schools need to make choices about which interventions to use on the basis of evidence-based research and advice from school support staff.
- Evidence-based practices have a sound theoretical base, empirical support drawn from quality experimental research, published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Effects of the practices and interventions must result in improved outcomes for students, based on reliable data.

A range of resources are provided in our schools to support all learners guided by our *Learners First Strategy 2014–17*:

- Support teachers are based in every school, they are skilled teachers that support the school and classroom teacher to improve outcomes for students with disability and/or additional needs.
- Respectful Schools Support Teams provide a focus on developing and embedding school wide positive behaviour approaches and building staff capacity. There is one team based in each Learning Service consisting of a School Psychologist, a Behavioural Learning Leader and a Teacher Learning Leader.
- Support specialists include: school psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers, autism consultants, physical impairment coordinators, vision and deaf support teachers.
- Assistive technologies.
- Professional learning and online resources and materials.
- Supplementary special education funding.
- Building access and modifications.

School and support staff, in consultation with families, align available resources to the implementation of learning programs through the Individual Education Plan.

A large proportion of supplementary special education funding is allocated to teacher assistant use; however, inclusive schools utilise resources more broadly and flexibly to meet the teaching and learning needs of all students.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Better Support for Students

Professor Michael Giangreco from the University of Vermont has undertaken research over many years in the area of effective use of resources in inclusive schooling. His findings note that a majority of special needs funding is aligned to teacher assistant employment; however, alternative resource provisions need to be considered to improve student learning outcomes.



## Michael Giangreco's research on the over reliance on teacher assistants offers a range of supports\*

Category of alternatives	Brief description of alternatives
Resource reallocation	Resources may be reallocated by trading in teacher assistant positions to hire additional special education teachers. Typically, one early career special educator can be hired for approximately the same cost as three teacher assistants.
Co-teaching	Co-teaching involves assigning a teacher and support teacher to work together in the same classroom. To maintain a naturally occurring number of students with disability, it may be necessary to share the support teacher across three or four classes, depending on class size.
Building capacity of teachers	Building teacher capacity (e.g. expectations of teacher engagement with students with disability, differentiated instruction, universal design, response to instruction, positive behaviour supports, curriculum overlapping, assistive technology) can reduce over-reliance on teacher assistants.
Administration duties	Teacher assistants may be assigned administrative duties that free up time for support teachers to collaborate with teachers and work directly with students.
Improving working conditions for support teachers and classroom teachers	Reducing caseload size, the grade range covered, and the number of teachers with whom special educators interact can improve their working conditions. Exploring changes in class size, availability of support teachers, scheduling coordinated meeting times, and providing access to adapted materials are examples of steps that can improve working conditions for teachers.
Peer supports	Encouraging peer support strategies can provide natural ways to support students with disability that may also benefit students without disability.
Self-determination	Purposely teaching self-determination skills provides opportunities for students with disability to have a voice in determining their own supports.
Teacher assistant pools	Establishing a small pool of highly skilled teacher assistants (or one floating position for a small school) allows for their temporary assignments to address specific, short-term needs.
Fading plans	In cases where a student is receiving a substantial amount of teacher assistant support, developing a plan to fade that support as much as possible can lead to greater student independence and more natural supports.
Dual qualified teachers	Hiring teachers who are certified in both general and disability education provides enhanced staff capacity for all students.

### **There is considerable evidence that program-based models of service delivery, that have characterised responses to diversity in the past, are incompatible with an inclusive school culture.**

Any in-school programs should be characterised by the following elements to ensure they are compatible with inclusive schooling:

- recognise data patterns and determine targets for support, ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- mobilise available resources to support identified needs
- make use of the wealth of knowledge from existing data sets and teams with expertise regarding students with disability
- collaboratively share resources and expertise to best tailor programs and improve achievements
- establish a whole school culture that celebrates the differences between students as a rich resource to support learning
- foster innovation and flexibility in teaching and learning that encourages and enables achievement
- implement evidence-based teaching and learning strategies that drive improved learning outcomes.

\*Michael Giangreco's research has been adapted for an Australian context

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Parent and Community Information and Participation

## *Learners First Strategy 2014–17*

### **Relationships:**

*We achieve growth and strength through partnerships and connections with our learners, their communities and the world.*

## *Respectful schools and workplaces*

*Promoting and sharing knowledge and understandings in positive and respectful ways that celebrate our successes and model our commitment to safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments and workplaces.*

## Key Messages

The Department of Education is focused on increased transparency and accountability and improved information for parents, schools and the community so that parents, teachers, schools and government have the information they need to better support students and schools.

An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.

While principals in inclusive schools act as mediators, coaches, and emotional supporters to those involved in the process of change, it is fundamentally a team effort. Parents, community members, school staff, educators, and students themselves must have a voice in the process.

The *National School Improvement Tool* outlines how schools need to actively seek ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations.

Inclusive schools build partnerships with parents, families, local businesses and community organisations (including allied health, family support, counselling and rehabilitation services) to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.

## Our Schools

Tasmanian Government schools support parents and carers as key partners and stakeholders within all educational programs.

Our schools work in partnership with communities to support, maintain and strengthen respectful relationships.

The local school and community, in consultation with parents, are best placed to understand the needs of their students. School communities are encouraged to make a greater contribution in deciding what suits their local school.

Our schools are encouraged to use the Index for Inclusion which is provided in the *Respectful Schools Respectful Behaviour* resource to enable detailed review of all aspects of a school and to help the school community identify and implement priorities for change.

*“If parents and professionals are to be effective in creating marvellous opportunities for our children, then both sets of partners must carve out time to know each other’s dreams, hopes, fears, constraints and perspectives.” (Fialka 1997)*

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Parent and Community Information and Participation



## Inclusive leaders:

- create and maintain a school climate in which all students and families feel a sense of identity and belonging
- work to ensure that all partners are committed to the school's common goals and purposes
- work with the whole school community through respectful practices to develop an inclusive school culture
- clearly communicate expectations with the school community as a whole
- foster relationships with the wider community, including local businesses and organisations through strategic partnerships to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes
- use data from DoE systems and reports to provide better information to parents on their child's learning.



## Inclusive teachers:

- value and actively seek knowledge of the student from families
- communicate with parents clearly, accurately and confidently about their child's learning
- foster an open and welcoming classroom learning environment
- model inclusive language and actions to students and families
- consider how transferring learning outside the classroom might enhance student learning
- develop positive relationships and interactions with and between all involved in the student's learning
- find ways to involve parents and carers and the wider community to support students
- consider and value competencies, knowledge and experience of families.



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR SCHOOLS...

- **What is our school doing well to provide a greater say for school communities and improved information for parents, schools and community?**
- **How should our school leaders promote positive relationships between staff and with parents and the broader community to provide curriculum leadership?**
- **How can our school become more inclusive and create a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met?**
- **How will our School Association and our school strive to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted?**

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS THROUGH: Improved Parent and Community Information and Participation



Inclusive schools actively seek ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Reference: *National School Improvement Tool*.

Inclusive schools recognise parents and families as integral members of school communities and partners in their children's education. They actively team with families and respect their identities in a way that builds collaborative relationships for improved learner outcomes. This forms the basis for improved communication, strengthening conversations, building and nurturing relationships with a focus on improved student achievement.

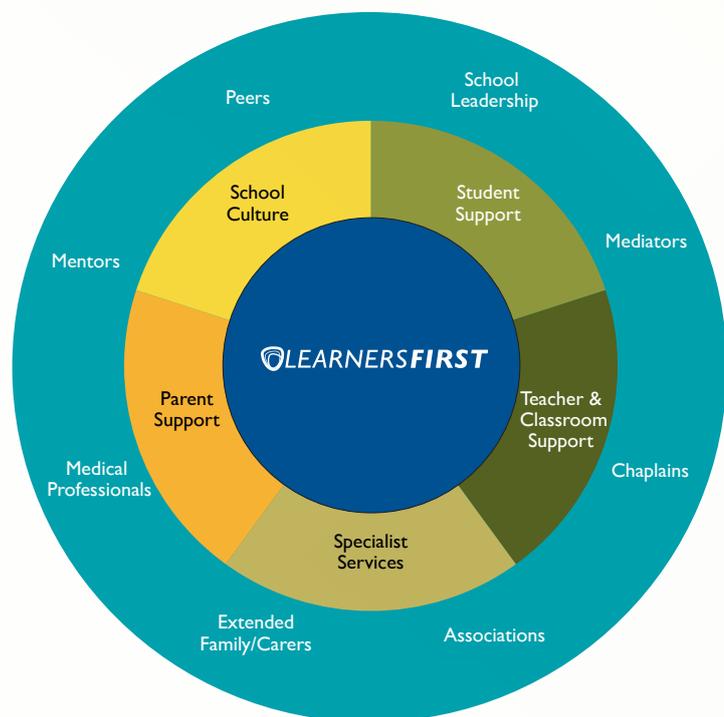
Through shared decision making, inclusive schools share insights and perspectives, build on their collective strengths, and develop a wealth of knowledge about what improves and what impedes learning for the student. They also encourage an appreciation of diversity and distinctiveness and the richness it brings.

Inclusive schools communicate with families and specialists at key intervals to make joint decisions, relevant to supporting students with disability, in achieving their full potential. Knowledge of students' strengths, capabilities and needs guides decision making at the individual education planning level. In this way teachers can plan for opportunities and issues that may arise, note adjustments required, and take action accordingly with consent from students and their families.

The wheel to the right describes the interaction between the large number of potential stakeholders and direct or indirect contributors in the individual education planning process.

The relationships formed with students and families can have a significant impact on student engagement and success in learning. Involving students as active participants (wherever possible) in the collaboration also opens up opportunities for teachers to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what students can do, their strengths, interests and aspirations. In genuine partnerships and team collaborations, schools together with support professionals and families come to:

- value each other's knowledge of the student
- value each other's contributions to and roles in the student's life
- communicate effectively and respectfully with each other
- develop trusting relationships.



Brochures have been developed in hard copy and online formats for parent and community member information. [http://www.education.tas.gov.au/About\\_us/publications/Pages/Publications.aspx](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/About_us/publications/Pages/Publications.aspx)

There are resources on the DoE staff intranet to assist with engaging families in the consultation process of developing Individual Education Plans for students with disability. <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/intranet>





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For more information on what support is available, please visit the Students with Disability webpage: [http://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents\\_carers/schools-colleges/Programs-Initiatives/Pages/Students-with-Disabilities.aspx](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents_carers/schools-colleges/Programs-Initiatives/Pages/Students-with-Disabilities.aspx)

## Glossary

**Differentiation:** It is recognised that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs if they are to be optimally engaged and challenged. The process of making those adjustments is known as the differentiation of classroom learning. Differentiation is what's expected of good teachers. The focus of this resource is to describe what is meant by differentiation and to provide practical strategies and tools that can be used to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences for all students.

**Educational adjustments:** Adjustments are supports, accommodations or adaptations that assist a student to access meaningful learning opportunities, to achieve their learning goals and show evidence of their learning.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** The term Individual Education Plan refers to both the ongoing process and the associated documentation that informs the education of a student with disability. It is a written plan used to describe, document, monitor, review and report on the student's education program, educational adjustments and learning outcomes.

**Pedagogy:** The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.

**School culture:** The sum of the values, cultures, safety practices, and organisational structures within a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways.

