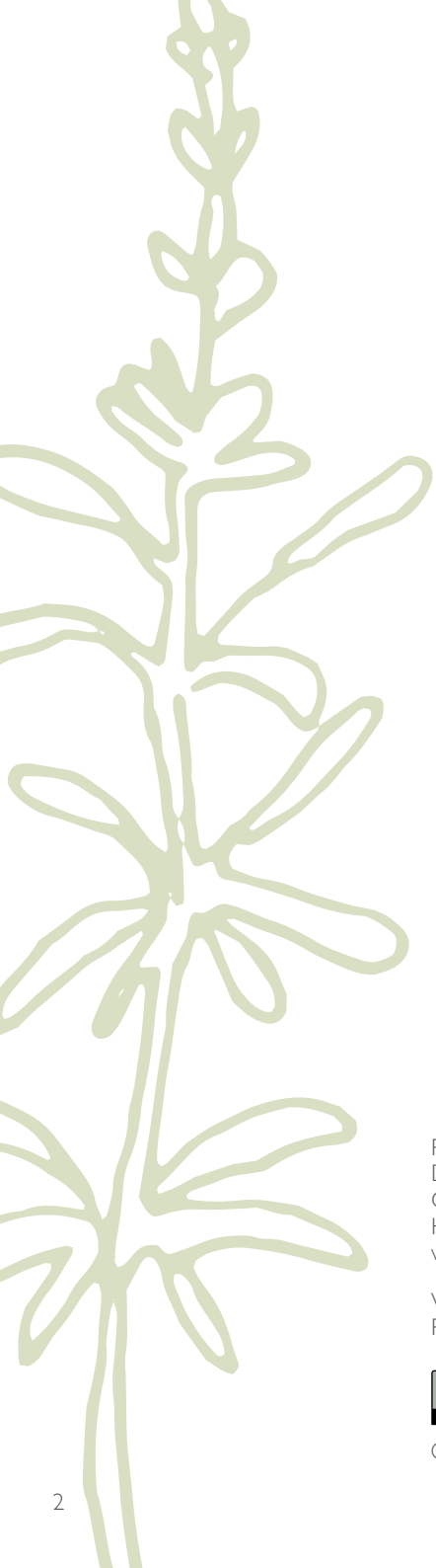


Nurturing UNIQUE ABILITIES

Supporting Students with Disability – 2017 Update





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Message from the Minister



Developing a more inclusive education system with more support for students with disability is a priority of the Tasmanian Government.

We knew that we needed to listen to families and those groups who have long been working to provide disability support to young people in this state, and that is why we undertook an independent review, which started in June 2014.

The Department of Education (DoE) through its Learners First Strategy is committed to enabling all learners 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.

Schools' primary goal is to make educational adjustments for each child to ensure an appropriate learning program. Teachers are making adjustments to their teaching and delivery style, classroom environment, resources and materials, and assessment processes to be inclusive of every student.

This work is supporting our commitment to students with disability and connects to the work of our establishment of the Inclusion Advisory Panel as part of implementing the recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce report into Education for Students with Disabilities.

We know there is still work to do to improve the educational experiences for students with disability. We are committed to implementing the Taskforce recommendations to ensure all schools are disability ready.

The purpose of this document is to provide the public with an update on progress in improving support for students with disability.

Jeremy Rockliff MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education and Training

Ministerial Taskforce for Improved Support for Students with Disability

In August 2015, the *Ministerial Taskforce Report – Improved Support for Students with Disability* was released which made recommendations to achieve a more inclusive education experience for Tasmanian students with a disability.

The Ministerial Taskforce identified the following five key priority areas:

1. Disability ready and responsive schools
2. Quality teaching and learning
3. Working in partnership
4. A funding model to support inclusive practice
5. Monitoring and accountability
6. Formation of an Inclusion Advisory Panel.

The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$12 million over four years, \$3 million per year, to implement reforms from the Ministerial Taskforce.

Over the past 12 months, the DoE has implemented a range of programs and initiatives to address the priority areas above including:

Inclusion Advisory Panel

The Inclusion Advisory Panel was established in 2016, (replacing the Ministerial Taskforce) and is made up of key stakeholders from relevant groups across Government, Catholic,

and Independent schools, including the independent chair, Ms Cheryl Larcombe.

The role of the Panel is to provide advice to the Minister on the opportunities and barriers to implementing the recommendations made by the Ministerial Taskforce across all education sectors within the context of the national and state agenda for students with disability.

Family Partnerships Model Program

The DoE, through the Professional Learning Institute and working with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, developed a program which is available to all schools for staff to be trained in the implementation of the Family Partnership Model.

The Family Partnership Model training is designed for school and Child and Family Centre (CFC) staff to assist school communities to work together more effectively and to build positive partnerships with families.

The Family Partnerships professional learning and school-based inquiry was fully booked for the 2016 program with twenty-nine schools participating in the training.

In 2017, nineteen schools have participated to date.

Inclusive Education Specialisation Initiative

The DoE has partnered with the Professional Learning Institute and UTAS to develop the new Graduate Certificate in Inclusive Education for school teachers.

The Graduate Certificate, which took place in Terms 1 and 2 in 2017, includes four compulsory units:

- Inclusive Education
- Learning Disabilities and Dyslexia
- Engaging Disengaged Students
- Multiple and Complex Disability.

This teacher development initiative has seen 25 teachers participate in the Graduate Certificate in Inclusive Education to enhance capacity in special education teaching and learning programs.

Education Support Specialist Initiative

The DoE has provided one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for each Support/Special School for the new position of education support specialist.

The education support specialist will complement the delivery of instructional practices and provide high level instructional or differentiated support, small group work and student supervision in a range of key areas including Early Childhood Education, Literacy and Numeracy, Special Education and Behaviour Support.

Support School Collaborations Program

This initiative provides an allocation of support school staff to assist mainstream schools to share inclusive practice, knowledge and skills across professional learning networks.

Each Support/Special School for 2017 has an allocation to enable staff relief for teachers to share specialist skills and knowledge in special and inclusive education with mainstream school colleagues.

This is an opportunity to use staff internally to share resources to support dual enrolment students and foster greater collaboration to align Learning Plans across schools.

Inclusive Practices Resources

The DoE has developed online and hard copy resources and support materials to provide professional learning for staff in inclusive practice.

A website for staff has been developed to share inclusive practice, including information, resources and materials, including videos and access to online professional learning. This online room has been developed in collaboration with Curriculum Services staff, and is regularly accessed by support teachers.

Examples of resources include:

- Learning Plan materials and templates
- Good Teaching Guides on Inclusive Teaching, Differentiated Practice, Supporting Students Impacted by Trauma
- Online Professional Learning disability specific modules (DSE and OLT).

Professional Support Staff Network

DoE has established a new model for professional support staff to support collaborative models of working with schools.

This has resulted in an increase in staffing of 2.2 FTE statewide and resources to assist with the implementation of the model, whereby the allocation of school psychologists, speech pathologists and social workers is made to each of the six networks.







Teachers and parents provided a range of suggestions for how inclusiveness for students with disability could be improved, including increased support staff and continued professional development and training for school staff.

Additional Initiatives

Speech Literacy Support Program

DoE has implemented a new *Speech Literacy Support Program* to identify and provide intensive intervention for Prep and Year 1 students at risk of not developing oral language and phonological awareness.

The program aims to screen all Prep and Year 1 students and implement the *ELF Program (Early Literacy Foundations Program)* an intensive 10-week program, for students at risk.

Professional learning is also provided for teachers and teacher assistants to support embedding oral language and phonological awareness skills in teaching programs at schools and through online resources.

Autism Support Classes


DoE is implementing best practice autism care in Tasmania at the Autism Support Class at Lindisfarne North Primary School.

An evaluation of the Lindisfarne North Primary pilot Autism Class was conducted by KPMG in 2016, which supported the continuation and extension of the program statewide.

In 2017 a new Autism Class has been established at Rose Bay High School from Term 1.

Two new Autism Support classes will be established at Summerdale Primary School (Launceston) and Romaine Park Primary School (Burnie) to commence in Term 3, 2017.





To view the full survey report,
visit www.education.tas.gov.au

Disability Survey/Forums Conducted by KPMG

In October 2016, the DoE engaged KPMG to conduct surveys and forums with principals, support teachers, class teachers and parents to gather information about the lived experience and satisfaction of parents with students with disability in Tasmanian Government schools and for teachers working with students with disability.

The purpose of this data collection process was to measure and monitor the progress of implementation of the Ministerial Taskforce recommendations, and to see what impact these initiatives are having across schools statewide.

From October – November 2016, data was collected across a significant number of parents and school staff (575). A small number of parents attended forums across the state.

Number of completed surveys by survey type:

Survey	Number of completed surveys
Parents	113
Support Teachers	171
Classroom Teachers	183
Principals	108

The full survey report is available from:
www.education.tas.gov.au

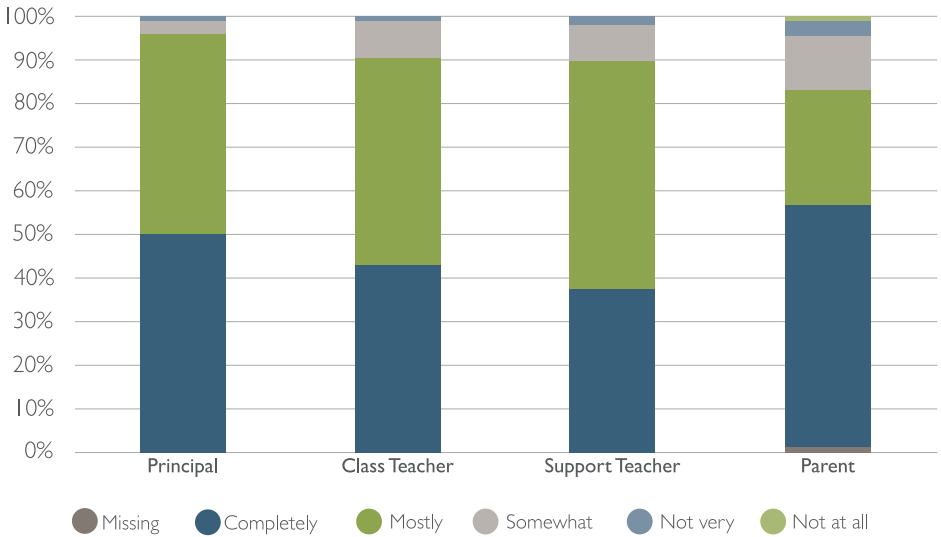


"Parents know their children best, and can assist in helping teachers understand their children and their learning patterns/behaviours."

Snapshots from the Findings

Support and inclusiveness for students with a disability

Overall, how inclusive do you feel your school's culture is for students with a disability?



Areas of Progress

Overall, the principals, teachers and parents who responded to the survey indicated that they considered their school to be completely or mostly inclusive, with over 80 per cent of respondents in all surveys selecting one of these two response options (the navy and green shaded areas in chart above).

Areas for Improvement

The parent forums highlighted that transition periods were of concern to parents. This included transition between primary and secondary school, and between classes each year at the same school. Parents reported that there were not always processes and practices in place at schools to ensure that information, such as the results of assessments, was passed between teachers and schools.

This meant that parents often needed to 'start again' with their child's teacher every year. The Student Support System has been upgraded to ensure content areas for school psychology, speech pathology, school health nurses and social work reports and information is readily available to the relevant school staff for all children.

Teachers and parents provided a range of suggestions for how inclusiveness for students with disability could be improved, including increased support staff and continued professional development and training for school staff. This feedback will be used by the DoE to ensure professional learning content and support structures focus on supports for students with disability.



How could your school be more inclusive for students with a disability?

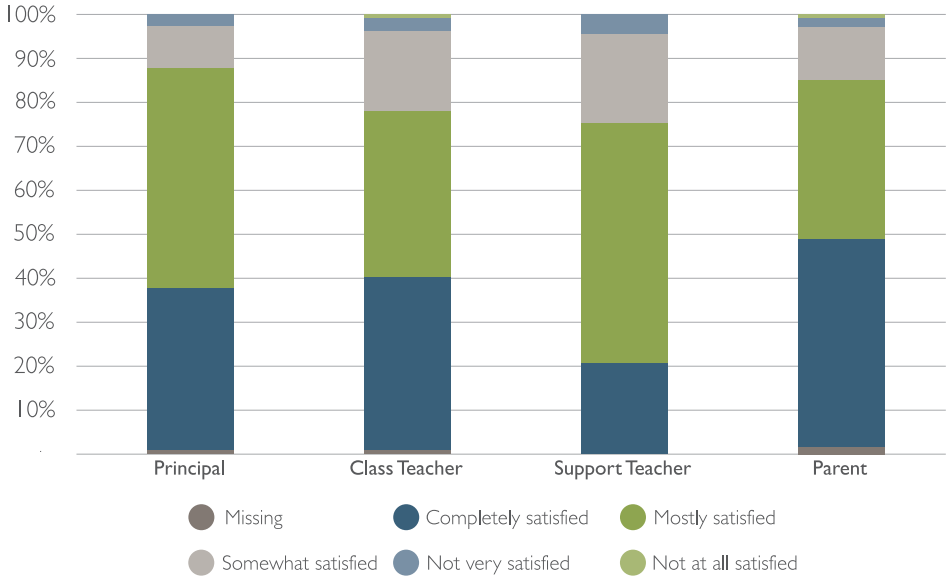
"Ensuring all teachers have completed relevant disability training."
— parent

"My child is in Grade 6, the school is supporting him with transition into high school and are teaching him life skills which he will need into the future. They are using a hands on approach to teach him."
— parent

"Ongoing professional development is needed to ensure staff capacity and expertise is continually improved in regards to differentiation."
— support teacher

Partnerships with families of students with a disability

How satisfied are you with parent or carer involvement in educational goal setting?



Areas of Progress

Principals, teachers and parents reported that partnerships between schools and families of students with a disability take place through a number of methods, including Learning Plans, goal setting, and general communication between schools and parents.

Over 75 per cent of survey respondents across the four cohorts (principals, classroom and support teachers, and parents) indicated that they were completely or mostly satisfied with parent or carer involvement in educational goal setting (as shown in the chart above).

Areas for Improvement

Suggestions for improving partnerships between schools and parents of students with disability included scheduling catch ups between teachers and parents throughout the year and encouraging parents to attend meetings between different staff members involved in the education of their child.

Learning Services and schools are developing staff capacity through the implementation of training in the Family Partnership model, which helps to build respectful and collaborative working partnerships between families and school staff.

What suggestions do you have for involving parents and carers in goal setting and planning?

“Regular contact between home and school, whether a communication diary or an email set-up, plus regular updating of goals on Learning Plans as needed”

— class teacher

“The school has been highly committed in recent years to my son. It has been a challenging time for the school as well as us and our son.”

— parent

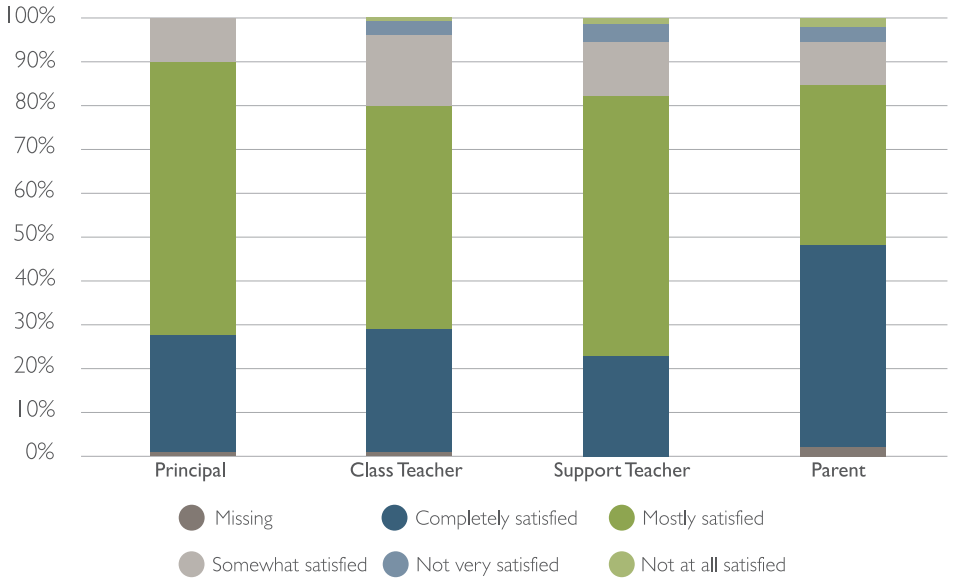
“Through shared electronic access to the individual educational plan.”

— principal



Resourcing for students with a disability

To what extent are you satisfied that your school is able to provide reasonable adjustments needed to cater for students with disability?



Areas of Progress

A number of parents noted the value of a 'sensory room' or 'learning centre' that is a physical space and staffing allocated to assist students with special learning requirements and children with disability.

Areas for Improvement

A common frustration described by parents was the lack of support and clarity about how to explore and pursue funding to support their child, and the relationship between diagnosis and testing and funding support.


In the surveys, each of the four cohorts were asked to identify three adjustments or supports that would make the greatest impact for students with disability. Across the four cohorts the responses were fairly consistent.

The top three options selected by respondents were:

- Modifying programs and adapting curriculum delivery and assessment strategies
- Professional learning and training for staff

- Additional personnel such as tutors or aides for personal care or mobility assistance.

The DoE is currently investigating funding models aligned to student needs rather than disability categories to inform future funding processes.

A close-up photograph of a child's hands using a paintbrush to apply green paint to a dark object. The child is wearing a colorful, multi-colored wristband. The background is blurred, showing other children and a table with paint containers.

Do you have any suggestions as to how the Department could ensure reasonable adjustments needed for students with a disability can be made?

Be willing to step outside the regular methods of teaching and look at alternatives such as Developmental, Individual, Relationship-based (DIR) Floortime techniques which helps to increase interactions and connection with children with autism.”

– parent

“People need to know early on what is available to them”

– parent





Learning and development of teachers working with students with a disability

Areas of Progress

The majority (75 per cent) of support teachers were completely or mostly satisfied that they have the skills needed to support staff in their school to work with students with disability.

The three preferred areas that support teachers would like to develop further expertise in are personalising the curriculum, managing challenging behaviours and assistive technologies. The DoE through Learning Services and Professional Learning Institute will embed opportunities for professional learning in these areas within their programs.

Areas for Improvement

While the majority of principals and classroom teachers reported that they were completely or mostly confident that teachers have the skills they require to adequately support students with disability at their school, the results suggested that there is a cohort of teachers that require some up-skilling to adequately support students with a disability.

Although parents were not explicitly asked about school staff learning and development, there were a number of comments made at the parent forums that related to this key theme.

At the forums parents noted the need for more teacher professional development associated with disabilities – in terms of knowledge, awareness and practice in relation to learning and overall inclusiveness of school experience.

The DoE will continue to build on its workforce development initiative and professional learning program offered to staff to ensure the knowledge, skills and capacity needed to include all students in inclusive learning programs.

How can your school or the Department ensure that support teachers have the skills and expertise needed to support staff in their school to work with students with disability?

“Ensuring that there are processes in place, whereby support teachers remain in the role for a specified time, at least two years.”
— support teacher

Next steps

Data from the surveys and forums give important baseline data on inclusive practices and supports in schools, and will help to inform areas for school improvement in relation to inclusive practice.

The Inclusion Advisory Panel – Disability Focus is providing advice on implementation of the Ministerial Taskforce recommendations across all education sectors within the context of the national and state agenda for students with disability.

The DoE will continue to engage with parents, students and teachers working with students with disability. This engagement will include surveys and parent forums every year to continue to measure the views of parents of students with disability, principals, support teachers and classroom teachers.

While there is always room for improvement, we are making progress.



"I feel we are on the right path to supporting all students and families with a disability."
— class teacher

The DoE will continue to engage with parents with students with disability in Tasmanian schools and for teachers working with students with disability.





Contact:

For further information please contact:

State Support Service

Email: statesupportservice@education.tas.gov.au