

Analysis of Feedback
from Stage 1 Review
of
Educational Services for Students with
Disabilities
in
Government Schools

July 2002

Undertaken by

Ian Crosby



PDT CONSULTANCY

SUITE 22 KOBOLD HOUSE
17 PROWSE STREET
WEST PERTH 6005
PHONE: (08) 9321 5656
FAX (08) 9321 5650

Web: www.pdtconsultancy.com.au

Email: pdtu@iinet.net.au

CONTENTS PAGE

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Introduction	1
School Administrators	3
Parents	6
Teachers	13
Education Assistants	17
Other Respondents	19
Acceptance Of The Principles	25
Comparative Views And Issues	26



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education sought feedback from all stakeholders regarding the principles and indicators developed during Stage 1 of the Review.

Responses were received from a range of stakeholder groups, submitted by both individuals and as collective responses. Two hundred and eighty nine response forms were received, of these 264 had entered ratings of agreement against the seven principles and were included in the analysis of the ratings. The written comments from all 289 feedback forms were analysed to identify issues and trends from the responses. The numbers of responses from the self selected categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Which of these best describes the main perspective from which you are responding?	Number of responses
1. School Administrator	46
2. Parent	30
3. Parent/Caregiver of child with a disability	89
4. Student	0
5. Teacher	44
6. Education Assistant	12
7. TAFE	0
8. University	0
9. Education/disability professional	15
10. Member of the community	9
11. Private training provider	0
12. Professional association	0
13. Whole school association	4
14. Other (please state)	15
Total submissions with ratings of the principles	264

The five major homogeneous categories where responses were analysed and graphed separately were:

- School Administrators
- Parents
- Parents/Caregivers of a child with a disability
- Teachers
- Education Assistants.

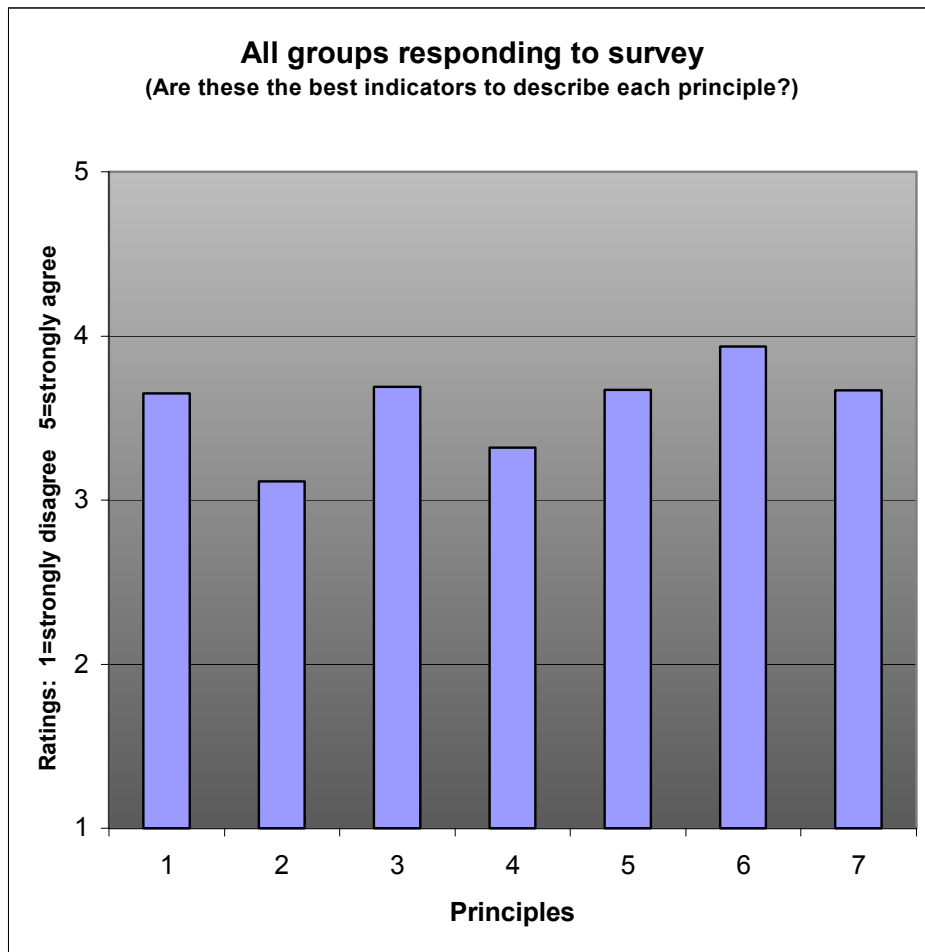


Information in relation to these groups is reported first. Issues and information from the other respondents follows these groups.

Acceptance of the Indicators for the Seven Principles.

When all the rated responses were analysed the overall acceptance of the indicators for the seven individual principles is outlined in Graph 1.

Graph 1.



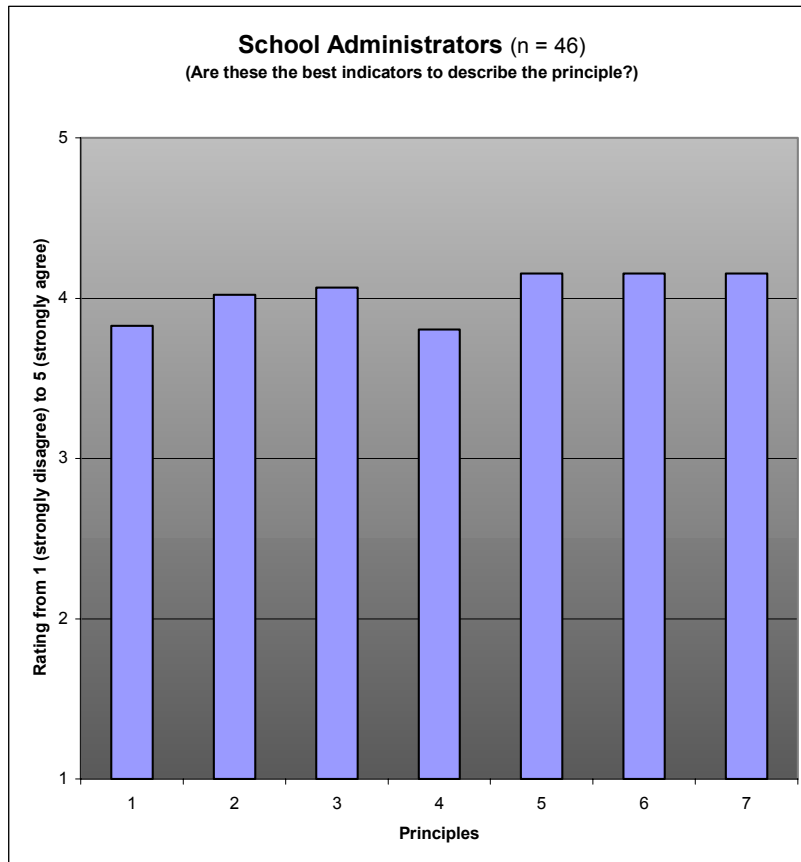
For all principles, the listed indicators gained a positive response as being the best indicators to describe the principle. The indicators for Principles 2 and 4 had the lowest support while the indicators for Principle 6 had the greatest acceptance. As will be explained in the parent responses, the lower rating on Principles 2 and 4 were effected by large number of responses from parents with children associated with Language Development Centres, who uniformly disagreed with the indicators for these two principles.

From the comments made by some respondents, it appears that at times some were making a rating of the principle rather than necessarily the appropriateness of the indicators.



SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Graph 2



Acceptance of Indicators

The school administrators who provided feedback displayed a high level of acceptance of the indicators for all seven principles as demonstrated in Graph 2. For all the principles, the school administrators' ratings were above the average of the total group and were relatively even across all the principles.

Principle 1

Acceptance was high for the indicators for this principle. Many respondents added that a commitment to resourcing should be added to this principle. Two respondents queried whether there was a contradiction between this principle and the Education Act which they felt indicated that enrollment could be refused if an appropriate program could not be offered. Some respondents commented that the indicators were very general in nature and that they felt that a greater degree of specificity was required.

Other comments that were added included that:

- All students should have the right to be included, not just those students on the inclusion program.
- Parents need to know at the time of enrollment the nature and amount of support that would be provided.

- A range of appropriate environments needed to be available to meet the needs of students.

Principle 2

The issue of resourcing was a fairly constant theme in the additional comments made in relation to this principle. There was also a query by several respondents whether the mention of 'equity' was in relation to 'outcomes' or 'opportunity'. There was also a statement that the indicators should include some mention of system support to achieve this principle. Some of the additional comments included that:

- there is a need for Educational Administrators to have the skills and training to meet these indicators; and
- all staff needed training to allow for this principle to be achieved.

Principle 3

There was strong acceptance of the indicators for this principle. Several respondents felt that it was difficult to canvass the views of younger students. Another queried which student views needed to be sought, students with special needs or mainstream students. Again a fairly constant theme from many respondents was an feeling that resource increases would be required to make the adjustments.

Principle 4

The indicators for this principle had the lowest acceptance amongst the school administrators, with an average of 3.80. This was still high in comparison to the total group. There was a suggestion that the last indicator needed at the end of the sentence the addition of "earmarked for students with specific needs."

Themes that featured in a number of responses were that resources needed to be adequate and not at the expense of other groups or facilities. This linked with a fear that funding may be redirected from Education Support facilities to the extent that the facilities may not be viable. There was also a concern from several respondents that rural and remote students may need additional resources.

One respondent included that there was a need for a review mechanism for resource allocation. Another queried whether equitably resourced needed to be defined.

Principle 5

With an average response of 4.15 for the acceptance of the indicators for Principles 5, 6 and 7 these indicators had the highest acceptance.

A couple of responses indicated that the respondent saw indicators one and two to be very similar and perhaps a duplication. Many respondents felt in-service training



needs to be increased and that the mention of in-service training should be made in the indicators.

Principle 6

The themes in the additional comments for this principle nearly all referred to the need for sufficient services. Some respondents, particularly in country areas mentioned a perceived current shortage of services. A strong concern by one respondent centred around the query of who would do the coordinating. This person felt this was a very large task in schools where there were many students with special needs.

Principle 7

There were two consistent themes in the additional comments in this area.

1. That parents need to be part of the collaboration; and
2. That it is often difficult to have all parties present for the necessary collaboration.

Other comments added in this area were quite varied. One respondent queried whether Ed Support Facilities and LDC etc could develop collaborative relationships with mainstream schools. Another person was concerned that transport should not dictate student placement.

Acceptance of the Principles

In response to the question, "Are these the best principles to describe quality education for students with disabilities in Western Australian government schools?" the School Administrators had the highest level of acceptance apart from Education Assistants. (3.80 compared with 3.91 for Education Assistants.)

Themes and Issues for School Administrators.

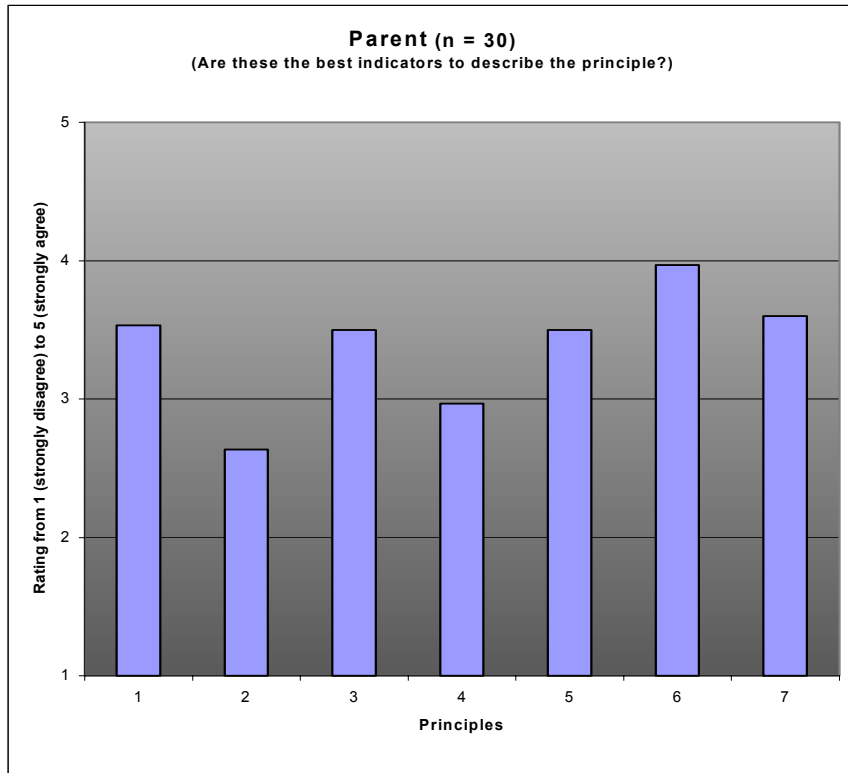
By far the predominant theme for School Administrators was the issue of the resourcing to allow these principles to be fulfilled to the extent that is needed. While acceptance of the principles was high, there appeared a level of scepticism regarding the likelihood of funds being sufficient to implement the principles.

The need for appropriate and adequate training was another consistent theme. An issue that was raised by some respondents was the rights of teachers in relation to support and such areas as occupational safety and health.

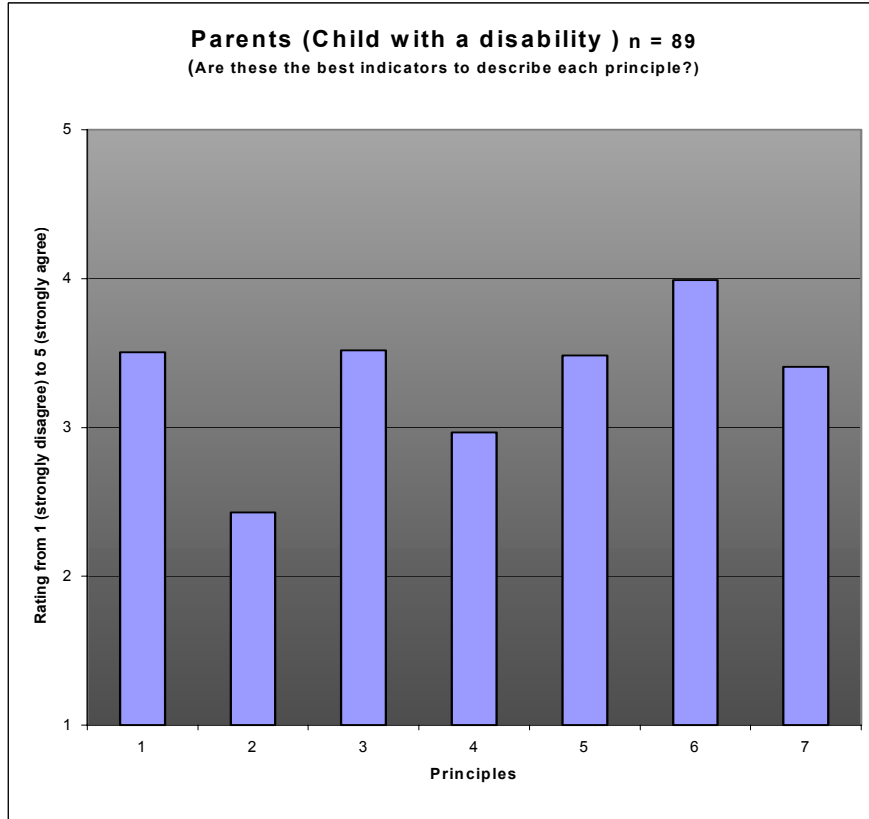


PARENTS

Graph 3



Graph 4



PARENTS

There were two categories in the demographics that parents could use to respond to the question:

“Which of these best describes the main perspective from which you are responding?”

- Parent
- Parent/Caregiver of child with a disability.

Thirty respondents indicated the first category (Graph 3) and eighty nine indicated the second (Graph 4). As can be seen from the levels of acceptance of the indicators for the principles the responses from these two groups are very similar. From the comments made in the questionnaires by the group who indicated the first category, it would appear that most of these responses were from the perspective of a parent with a disability. For this reason the responses of both these categories have been analysed together.

Within the group of parents who provided feedback, there appeared to be approximately thirty who were associated with the Language Development Centres. These responses came from individuals, however they all contained the similar ratings and comments in regard to the indicators and acceptance of the principles.

Acceptance of Indicators

The ratings of the indicators associated with six of the principles were lower from the parent groups than for the respondents as a whole. The only principle where the indicators were accepted a level higher than the total group average was for principle six. For this area parents rated the indicators at 3.96 and 3.98 compared to the whole group average of 3.93.

For Principles 2 and 4 the average ratings of the acceptance of the indicators was below three, which would indicate an overall disagreement that these are the best indicators to describe these principles. In these two principles the parents associated with a Language Development Centre uniformly gave low ratings of the indicators. Most of these responses indicated a ‘1’ for Principle 2 and a ‘2’ for Principle 4. This significantly altered the overall acceptance ratings. If the acceptance of the other parents is examined for Principle 2 the ratings were 3.77 and 3.88 for the two groups, well above the total group average. For Principle 4 the acceptance of the indicators by the other parents was 3.83 and 4.06 well above the group average.

It is fair to say that for parents, other than those associated with a Language Development Centre, there was a high degree of acceptance of the indicators for the principles.

Principle 1

There was strong acceptance of this principle and the indicators. Many respondents seeing these as the fundamental principles of inclusion. Few respondents made additional comments in relation to this area. There were some comments calling for a strengthening of the indicators to make the parent final decision makers. Another parent felt that indicator two provided an 'out' and should be deleted. Another suggested that the words "and are tested" were added after the word "participate" in indicator two.

Some parents expressed a concern with the language of the principles and the indicators, one stating that "right" and "appropriate" are ambiguous and expressing concerns regarding who will determine these matters. This respondent also expressed concern regarding "informed parent choice" and suggesting that this needs to be independent to the Department of Education.

There was also a concern that resources might not be available at the local and school level to allow this principle to operate.

As can be expected in a diverse sample a range of options were expressed regarding the ideal situation. One parent of a student with a disability stated,

"Integration should occur only when it does not adversely affect the majority and the individual. Some parents and professionals do not see the big picture."

Another parent expressed,

"I want the right to choose. ESC now, mainstream later (I hope). ESCs with integration are great for my son."

The respondents from the LDCs all made one of following statements:

- "Acknowledge the different type of disabilities then acknowledge the right of each group to have access to facilities dedicated to those special education needs."
- "The right of students with disabilities to have access to facilities dedicated to special education needs."
- "Acknowledging diversity/variants of disabilities and the right of students with these disabilities the access to facilities dedicated to their educational needs."

Principle 2

As previously mentioned the average rating of the acceptance of these indicators was low, however the responses other than from the LDC parents were quite high.

Many of the comments indicated the need for training at all levels of the system to allow this to happen. The resourcing needs were also raised a number of times.

Two suggestions for additions to the indicators were;

1. That dot point 1 needs to reflect all levels of the system not simply the school community.



2. That dot point three read, “that the leader is well trained in leadership and disabilities.”

One parent raised the need for an independent advocate for parents. Another added the comment,

“ as long as you do not mean inclusion as to include ALL children into mainstream with no ESCs.”

The majority of responses from the LDCs gave one of the following statements:

- “Educational leaders take a proactive role in supporting and expanding existing facilities so they may improve services to students with special needs.”
- “Adequate resources are allocated to special needs children (teachers, equipment and school specialists).
- “I want to ensure equity in existing education and special needs education.”

Principle 3

There was little difference between the parent groups in response to the indicators for this principle. There was some query over the use of the word ‘adjustments’ and the potential for this to be misinterpreted. A strong desire was expressed for parents to be involved in the decision making and in such activities as the selection of Education Assistants.

Another parent expressed the opinion that there could be the need for a review board or review mechanism.

A strong comment from one respondent was,

“ Parents must have a greater input into any “adjustment” decisions. Discrimination should not be minimised - it is illegal and therefore should not be tolerated at all.”

The majority of responses from the LDCs gave one of the following statements or a variation of these statements:

- “Disabilities take many forms and all require particular types of educational approaches. Consideration should be given to each type of disability and the most effective form of aid.”
- “I disagree with this. Does it mean we will not have LDCs.”
- “Any decisions take into consideration the diversity of all disabilities and how effect any adjustments will be have on each form of disability.”

Principle 4

In this area there was strong support for the resourcing to be on an ‘at needs basis’ rather than from a fixed budget and also that the resource allocation be transparent. There was also concern for students who “fall through the gaps” or have multiple problems.



Some parents were concerned that 'aide time' might be reduced, however another view was that there is a need to look at the total situation before deciding on appropriate support. Another parent hoped that resources could be allocated to a mainstream school not just in an Education Support facility.

There was also a query regarding who would determine appropriate programs, the parent or the department?

One respondent suggested adding to point five, "demonstrate in learning outcomes". The responses from the LDC parents virtually all stated,
"Existing specialist facilities to be extended to accommodate students' special education needs."

Principle 5

There were not many additional comments made in relation to the indicators for this principle.

There were two suggested changes to the wording of point one. One respondent suggested adding "resourced", while another suggested deleting "disabilities".

In relation to dot point two, one respondent suggested deleting "benchmarks", another stated benchmarks were vital.

The issue of appropriate class sizes was raised, as was the need for IEPs to be implemented without delay, where they are required. Parent views on what constitutes effective teaching for their child should be taken into account in the opinion of one respondent. Other respondents felt that teacher professional development was vital to achieve this principle and one even went as far as suggesting that teacher performance should be reviewed to ensure they were doing the right thing.

The LDC responses tended to involve one of the following statements:

- "A full evaluation of the effect academically and emotionally on disabled students forced into mainstream schooling."
- "Centres of excellence such as LDCs are drawn on as expertise appropriate. A full evaluation of existing facilities be conducted for effectiveness with a view to expansion."
- "How will mainstream teachers find time to teach identified students with disabilities? Language Development Centres do an excellent job in teaching language disorders/disabled children. Increase these centres not decrease."

Principle 6

The indicators for this Principle 6 received a high degree of acceptance from parents, higher than the whole group average.



The comments associated with this area again reinforced the desire that parents be involved in the decision making. There was also a concern that the services and facilities for students needed to be available in mainstream settings and that appropriate support be available for all students. This was linked with the comment that sufficient resourcing was essential for these indicators to be achieved.

Full information in schools regarding the services available was seen as essential and once programs are in place that parents are kept informed of the progress. Another respondent felt that there needed to be a random review of what teachers were doing in the class to ensure that therapy programs and suggestions were acted on.

The responses from the LDC parents revolved around:

- “As a backup LDCs are available for those who fall through the gaps.”
- “I agree in principle but only if children that identified are taken out and given help that they need.”
- “Existing systems are extended to provide appropriate support for all students.”

Principle 7

The indicators associated with Principle 7 were rated with very little additional comment. The need for parents to be part of the collaboration was stated by several respondents. In line with this one person suggested that in dot point one the word “parents” should be added between service providers and staff. Another suggested an addition to dot point 4 of the words “and protocols are available to parents.”

Collaboration at school level was also seen as important. There were also a number of comments that called for greater communication between therapists and parents and teachers and parents.

The availability of suitably trained Education Assistance was also mentioned in the context of this principle.

The LDC comments were mainly “Responsibilities and expectations can realistically met by having sufficient service providers to meet student’s needs.” Other comments made by this group were:

- “Parents are consulted in this process.”
- “Talk to parents, schools to make sure services are provided to suit disability.”
- “As a backup LDCs are available for those who fall through the gaps.”
- “Talk to parents - on a level that they understand. This feedback form is not written for the average population to understand easily. Under the umbrella of LDC this form seems very inappropriate. These points are all very well for people with disabilities. But we do not want any funding removed for LDCs.”



Acceptance of the Principles

In response to the question, “Are these the best principles to describe quality education for students with disabilities in Western Australian government schools?” Parents had the lowest average score (3.36 and 3.31). If the LDC responses were isolated, the acceptance is much higher. (3.61 for parents, 4.06 for Parents/caregivers of a child with a disability.)

There were some general comments made in this section of the survey. These included a number of respondents noting that specialist programs/facilities were not mentioned, with a strong assertion that these must not be lost.

Other respondents saw implementation as the challenge, not the development of the principles. Some country respondents felt the country considerations needed to be taken into account and maintained that decisions should not be made in the city without meeting the child or assessing the situation.

The parents’ right to choose was reinforced in the section by some respondents.

The LDC group mainly stated “acknowledge cost/benefits and the need for early intervention by specialist LDC, parent and teachers before the choice to mainstream occurs.”

Themes and Issues for Parents.

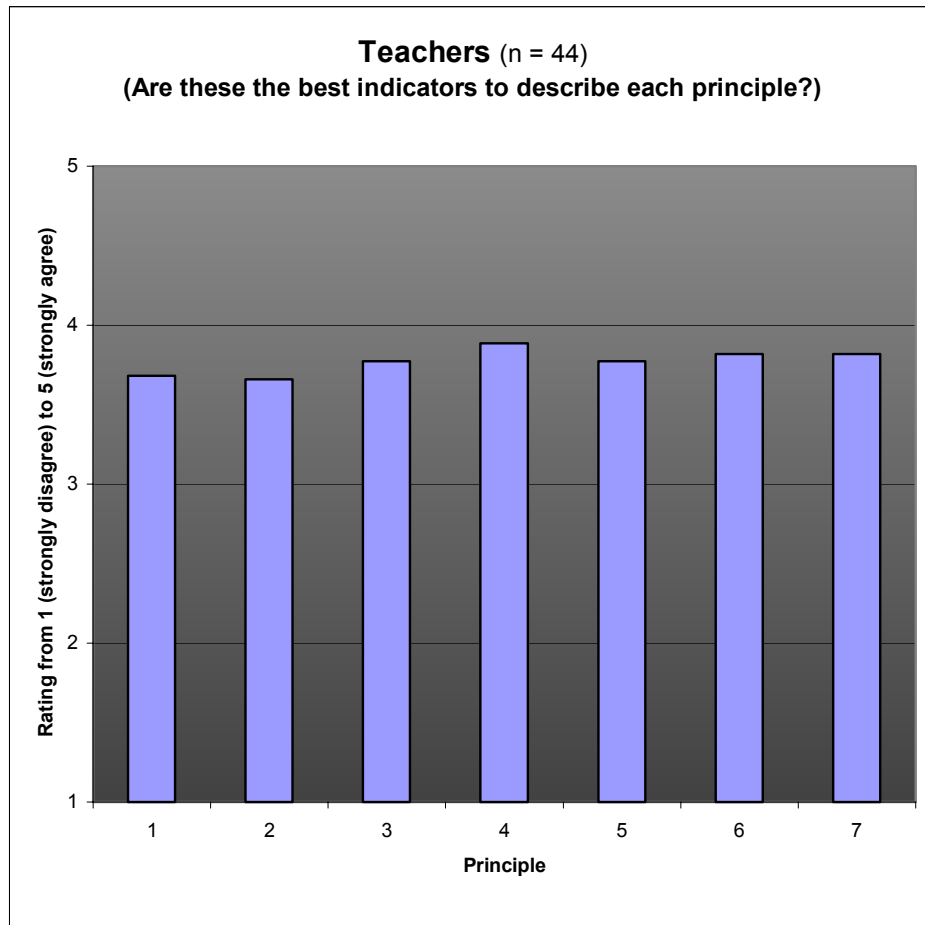
The predominant theme for the parents other than the LDC responses, was the right and need for parent involvement in all aspects of their child’s education. The concern for the resources to back the principles and indicators up was also often mentioned. While many parents welcomed the principles and indicators as a foundation for inclusion of students, there were also numbers of parents who did not wish to see a lessening of the facilities and services that are currently provided particularly the Education Support Centres. The need for training and knowledge development for teachers and administrators was also seen as a vital part of the implementation of the services underpinned by the principles.

The parents from the Language Development Centres were extremely keen to see a continuation of these facilities and services, and would not wish any diminishing of this resource.



TEACHERS

Graph 5



Acceptance of Indicators

The teachers who provided feedback displayed a high level of acceptance of the indicators for all seven principles as shown in Graph 5. For all the principles, the teachers' ratings were around the average of the total group and were relatively even across all the principles.

Principle 1

The predominant comment made by teachers in this area was the need to guard against adverse effects on other students through the implementation of this principle. The adequate resourcing of the school was one aspect of ensuring other students weren't disadvantaged, as well as being essential for the achieving of the indicators.

There was a feeling from some responses that the appropriateness of each placement must be a priority.

Some respondents stated that the indicators needed to be more specific if they were going to be of any use.

Principle 2

Several respondents felt that dot point two should include the word “skill” along with awareness and confidence. This linked with the most common concern from this section that many teachers are not trained to teach students with special needs. How mainstream teachers will be supported was another major concern in relation to this principle and its indicators. The need for the support prior to the student being enrolled was voiced by one respondent, while another queried whether an Education Support trained teacher could be based in every school to provide the support.

The concern for adequate resourcing was also reflected in many of the comments, rather strongly by one person who stated,

“Principles are idealistic but reality in schools is very different. Funding would need to be available to assist schools as we struggle with “core” students let alone students with special needs.”

This person still rated the indicators as a 4 as the best indicators to describe the principle.

Principle 3

The level of funding available and required for the achievement of these indicators was the main response in this area. There was also some concern regarding the use of the term ‘adjustments’. Some respondents felt that this term was vague and needed to be more specifically defined. Another comment was that the speed of information flow between schools was important, particularly when students are making transitions between schools.

Principle 4

A suggested addition to dot point two was the words “and behavioural needs”.

The main concern for teachers in this principle was the level of resourcing needed. The feeling that the current level of resourcing was hugely inadequate came through the responses and that this principle needed a major commitment from the government to make it a reality. This was coupled with the statement that the resourcing needed should not be to the detriment of the majority of the population.

The measurement of the accountability mentioned in the final indicator caused some question and concern for some teachers. The other term that prompted comment was the ‘on a needs basis’. Who was going to determine this need was the concern.

A comment from one respondent is worth noting,

“Are you aware how much is involved in implementing this? The present system is doing a fantastic job.”



Principle 5

Understandably the need for training and retraining featured as strong themes through the additional comments in relation to this principle. One respondent believed that parents needed access to some of this training as well.

The bigger classrooms and facilities to allow the appropriate pedagogy was also requested.

There was some nervousness regarding across the board benchmarks with a feeling that benchmarked goals to aim toward were more appropriate. The need to use centres of excellence such as LDCs was raised in one response.

Principle 6

A range of responses was made in relation to this area, though none were suggested changes to the indicators.

The need for schools to engage in 'time effective' collaborative models was stated in one response, recognising the benefits in collaboration while acknowledging the time consuming nature of the collaboration.

The need for therapy services to be available in mainstream schools as teachers can not be expected to provide therapy was also raised. Another related comment was that service providers need to demonstrate accountability in responding to the local school context. The advantages of some support services being centralised, such as the Vision Impairment Service, was also seen by one respondent.

The resourcing required to achieve this principle was also mentioned again.

Principle 7

The difficulty in collaborating with many support staff when there are many students in a school with special needs was seen as a practical problem in this area. The acknowledgement of the importance of collaboration, but the time that is required was raised again in this area. The need for a coordinating case-worker to facilitate the transition between years and schools was suggested as one strategy in this area.

Acceptance of the Principles

The acceptance of the seven principles as the best to describe to describe quality education for students with disabilities in Western Australian government schools was high for teachers (3.70). The rating was only slightly behind that of Principals (3.80) and Education Assistants (3.91).



As would be expected there was a range of views regarding the principles and their implementation. The majority of the comments reflect the positive ratings of the principles. The comments made in this section are listed below.

- “The principles themselves are most appropriate as are each of the descriptors but the implementation and effective resourcing at the school level is the area where I believe the focus needs to be directed.”
- “Specialist student resources need to be funded separately from school allocated resources.”
- “We agree with the principles but how they are applied by schools and administrators is where the system fails students with disabilities. Guarantee training, support staff, dollars. Wording of questions make it impossible to disagree. Wording also difficult to understand.”
- “The most important principle that over-rides all others is the choice of the ‘parent’. As an Educator I believe the needs of the child should be paramount.”
- “Step into the real world”. What should be happening isn’t, because the Department allows too many loop holes to protect themselves.”
- “Acknowledge the potential efforts made by teaching staff involved. Acknowledge the potential effect on the education of students in the class.”
- “I cannot see how giving the parents the power to place their special needs child into a classroom with an untrained teacher and 30 other students, is addressing the needs of the child!”
- “We believe that these principles have been well researched and are excellent to say the least. They also reflect world trends. If all schools adopt and implement these 7 principles then inclusion and integration will be very successful.”
- “Best principles to describe the education of all students in WA.”
- “Effective funding, training and leadership - not principles on paper that are not backed up.”
- “Very appropriate and excellent for the present Ed Support system but not applicable to the mainstream. The retraining of the mainstream teachers will involve huge implications. Not all teachers have the inclination to teach disabled students.”
- “Need for more clarity, more appropriate terminology and a clearer link between documentation and practice.”
- “The existing services for children with a disability are excellent - if it ain’t broke - don’t fix it.”

Themes and Issues for Teachers.

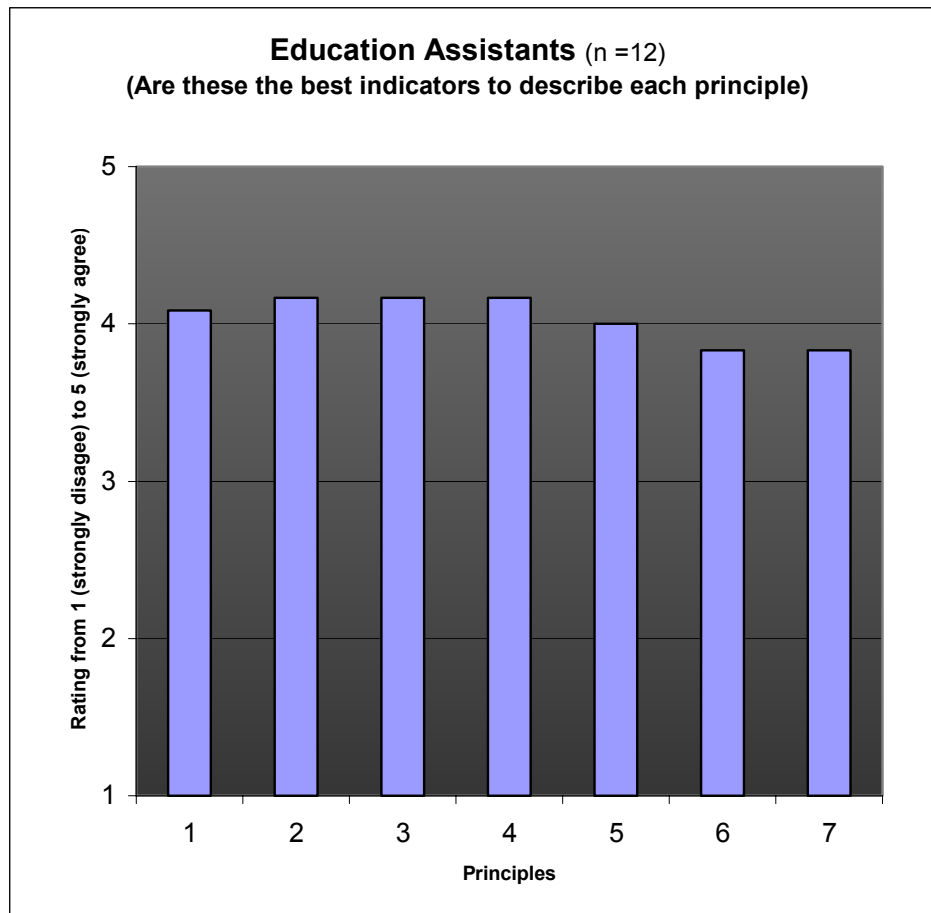
A strong theme to emerge from the responses from teachers was the concern that the needs of other students should not be adversely effected through the implementation of the principles. Teachers saw the need for adequate levels of resourcing as one of the essential ingredients to guard against this happening as well as necessary for the successful implementation of the principles.

The need for adequate training and support to allow teachers, who have no specific training in the teaching of students with a disability, to perform this role also permeated many of the responses.



EDUCATION ASSISTANTS

Graph 6



Acceptance of Indicators

The acceptance of the indicators for the 7 principles was higher for the Education Assistants who responded, than for any other group. The ratings of indicators for all principles was over four or close to this level (see Graph 6). There was however a relatively small group of respondents so it may be unwise to generalise these levels of acceptance too broadly across all Education Assistants.

As there were very few comments made by the small group of Education Assistants, it is not possible to analyse the responses for the various principles and the indicators.

Acceptance of the Principles

As with the acceptance of the indicators for the principles, the acceptance level for the principles themselves was high among this group of Education Assistants, 3.91 compared with the whole group average of 3.73.

Themes and Issues for Education Assistants.

As previously mentioned, very few Education Assistants made additional comments in relation to the principles or the indicators so it is not possible to draw out any themes or issues. The only comment that did arise more than once was in relation to the training of teachers and the timeliness of the required training.



OTHER RESPONDENTS

There were 30 responses where either the category 'education/disability professional'(9) or other (14) were identified as the main perspective of response. It appears that this group was reasonable diverse in background, ranging across disability professionals such as Disability Services Commission - Local Area Coordinators, advocacy groups, disability service providers as well as education providers. It was not possible to ascertain the background of some of these respondents. While it is not appropriate to treat these categories as a homogeneous group, the views that they expressed regarding the principles and indicators are important to note.

Acceptance of Indicators

The level of acceptance of the indicators associated with the seven principles was at similar levels for this group of respondents to the other groups analysed. Three of the thirty respondents in these categories indicated some level of disagreement with all the indicators and the principles themselves. The remaining respondents endorsed the indicators.

There was a range of comments and suggested changes to the indicators made by the respondents in these categories. These comments are listed in full below.

Principle 1

Additions to the indicators

- Students with disabilities have the right to enrol in their local school (or school of choice) - this promotes early development of social networks and community participation on local level.
- Students with disabilities are participating in classrooms to their full potential.
- Something to indicate children may need to start at a different pace (1/2 time etc.)
- Something to indicate greater equity in decision making meetings (Parents outnumbered)
- Students need to participate in all aspects of the school community (playtime, camps etc.)

Comments

- We can't imagine better than this and we have always dreamed that this may be possible. These are the fundamental principles of inclusion.
- Agreed - but be very careful about the costs and effectiveness. Its simply not efficient to provide the same level of support in small numbers across many schools, as larger numbers in fewer schools. That's a fact of life, inherent in the choice made.
- I don't think our students get any service of the first principle. They would not cope in that environment.
- Students receive the appropriate funding, technology and resources to allow them to participate on the same basis as other students.



Principle 2

Additions to the indicators

- Acknowledgement of the contribution made to the school environment by children with a disability
- Educators are trained in inclusive pedagogical and cultural practices at a tertiary level.
- Educators have required supports for inclusion.
- Educators are recruited with values and practical knowledge/experience of inclusion.
- Inclusion is preferable at a local school where the student resides.

Comments

- But be much more concrete! Training at the very basics during Bachelors of Education. Standards for teachers regarding basic knowledge - issues - pedagogy etc.
- Many teachers in mainstream do not relate to students with disabilities and do not know how to handle their special problems.
- Unfortunately this principle is flawed in that it preceptualizes a notion that some children have 'special needs' rather than all children have the same needs ie
 - The need to learn the best they can.
 - To develop a positive belief about themselves.
 - To grow up being valued for who they are
 - To have friends
 - To be heard as well as to be able to listen
 - To be able to get around their environment etc.Often children may required special measures by the school to meet their needs.

Principle 3

Additions to the indicators

- Adjustments/decisions have a clear and transparent process with right of appeal process.
- Social needs of a student are given due consideration. (As well as academic learning outcomes).
- Adjustments are continuously monitored to ensure their appropriateness.
- Exclusion only when a danger to other students
- What sanctions will be in place to deal with exclusive attitudes?
- A need to respect the privacy of person with a disability - not to be announced to every other parent as a matter of course - preventing negative attitudes.
- Social participation/involvement.
- Be more specific - mention IEP!

Comments

- Most parents would desire to have all of their children educated in the same local school with neighbourhood support and involvement. Parents need to be



recognised as primary partners in the education of their children and their views to be given greater respect.

- This principle is visible in practice when adjustments are being seen to be implemented in the classroom - not just recorded and documented.
- This is often used in Special Ed. It is hard to see how our Special Ed students get more benefits.
- Is 'adjustments' the best word? Perhaps something about flexibility/responsiveness or support.

Principle 4

Additions to the indicators

- Training provided for mainstream teachers in modifying and adapting curriculum. (Point four includes this?? Ambiguous as it refers to the flexibility of implementing programs - not on whether teachers are skilled enough to do so.)
- Parent involvement in staff recruitment (especially teacher aids) and other resource allocation.
- Social needs of a student be considered.

Comments

- No. But decided lack of clarity with those (indicators) present.
- Why change what is working very good. It is hard to see how our special students get more benefits.
- Very careful indeed. Will additional (ie new) funding become available? Substantial funds?
- The focus must move from identifying weakness in the child as a necessary precondition to adjustment to one where we identify weaknesses in the system to meet all of the needs of all of the children in a classroom.

Principle 5

Additions to the indicators

- Parent (and other stakeholders) to be involved at individual student level.
- Some flexibility in teaching models to allow for creativity and innovation.
- Social needs of a student be considered.
- All staff receive training on teaching and learning practices for students with disabilities. (ie not just Ed Assistants) and not just those teachers who have students with disabilities in their class.)
- Pre-service and post -service training for all staff (not just teachers).
- Should be in place for all students and requires good teaching practice.
- Should reflect the lack of ability within the system rather than the lack of ability within the individual with the disability.

Comments

- It is a mindset! As long as the terms "with disabilities" or "disabled" are included in the pedagogy definition - references may continue to be made and discrimination may continue to occur.



- If it is linked to Principle 1 it will not benefit our students as mainstream teachers are not Special Ed trained.

Principle 6

Additions to the indicators

- Parent/ student choice in services and support (within resources allocation) is essential.
- Partnerships with other government and non-government organisations will assist in ensuring responsive services to individual students and the community.

Comments

- No mention of identifying strength areas of students with disability to show means to maximise contribution.
- Which service holds the balance of power when consensus can not be arrived at?
- We have a good way of teaching these students and it would be a great cost to the community to train all teachers to fully understand and give support to students in need of constant supervision.
- It is difficult to get into the hearts and minds. The providers of these services need to be totally of the belief that all children have equal right to access all services.

Principle 7

Additions to the indicators

- Schools actively form collaborative partnerships with relevant government and non-government organisations.
- Department staff are trained about service providers, what they offer, how to refer students and access services etc.
- Families as part of partnership?

Comments

- Can we ensure that everyone involved in service delivery truly believes that inclusion is the right and only way to educate our children in the future? If so then it will work!
- Special Ed teachers do the above now and it works well.
- Refer to information available to support informed choice.
- Use locally based service providers rather than fly-in services - too expensive and not well informed.

Acceptance of the Principles

Only six of the thirty respondents in these categories did not support the principles as the best to describe to describe quality education for students with disabilities in Western Australian government schools. The majority of the respondents in these



categories were from outside the Department of Education. This level of acceptance gives some positive indication of the views of people from other organisations regarding these principles.

Some of the additional comments given by the respondents are listed below.

How could these principles be improved (if at all?)

- By being implemented effectively and monitored at school level.
- Vague terms like 'coordinated service provision' need to be defined more fully and made more explicit.
- Have faith that Inclusive Education will work! Follow through with the principles and match them with the indicators.
- Separate principles focussing on parent/student choice and adequate resource provision to ensure choice. (But a great start.)

Comments

- Principles and indicators do indeed cover the content, but in general I feel the indicators should be more concrete - measurable.
- Best describes any student, but where does reality "kick-in"?
- Most Ed Support students are well catered for in the system now so why change it to what is questionable and very expensive.
- Dyslexic children need more assistance (eg 1:1 tutoring). They have more potential than those with other disabilities but have no extra provision of aides, teachers etc. They have the potential to be employable. There should be a return of reading clinics, 'remedial' classes/ teachers/ tutors etc.

Themes and Issues for other categories.

As can be seen from the comments above, the issues raised are wide ranging. The need for greater parent involvement and their right to a place in decision making was advocated. The need for the principles and indicators to be described in language that is concrete and easily accessed by all was also raised.

While the advantages and necessity of inclusion was strongly expressed by some respondents, there were other opinions on the merits and cost effectiveness of this approach. The need for the appropriate training of staff to deliver appropriate outcomes for students with a disability was also strongly argued, as it has been with the other groups of respondents.

It was not possible to gain any clear indication from those respondents who disagreed with the principles and indicators why they disagreed and what they saw as other alternatives. One respondent made the comment,

"Survey is constructed to support Principle 1 - I feel if students are placed in mainstream fully, are not supported or resourced fully, this will fail."

Another respondent who disagreed with the principles appeared to do so because of a view that the current Education Support system worked well. There may well be



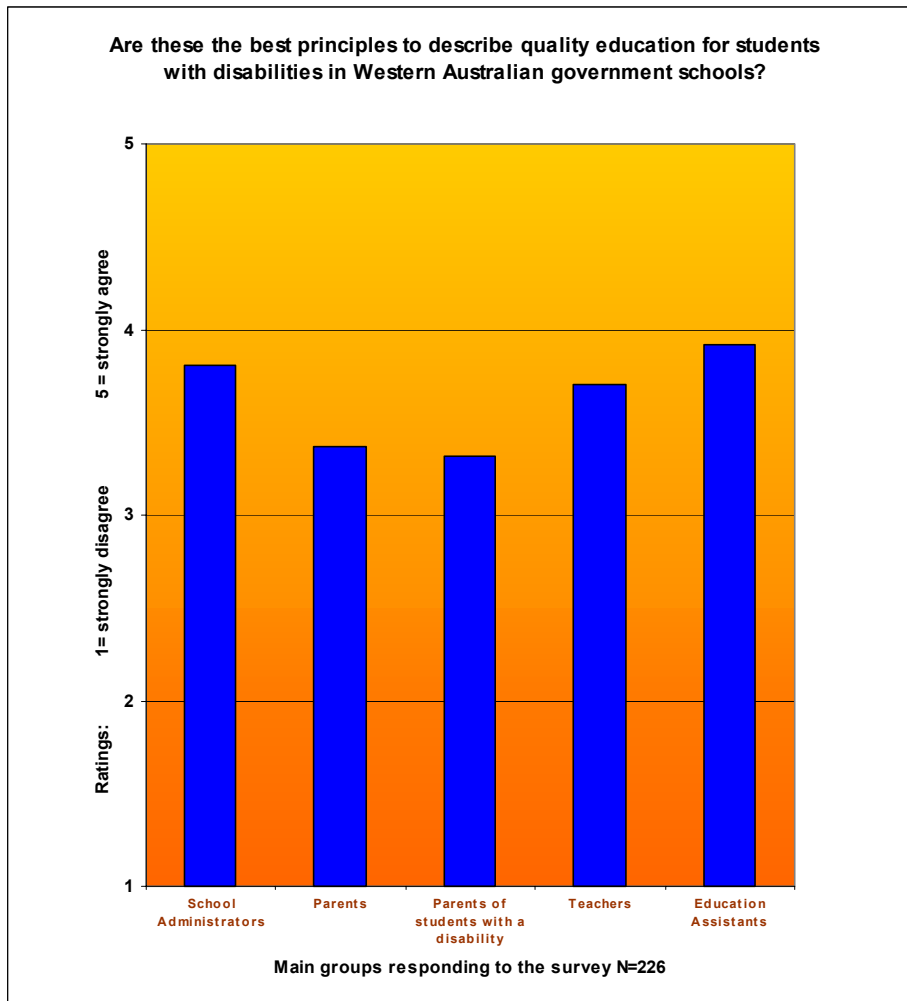
other reasons for some other respondents having low acceptance of the principles and indicators.



ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES

The individuals and groups who responded to the request for feedback were in favour of the seven principles and the indicators of the principles. In only nineteen of the 289 responses examined did the respondent state that they strongly disagreed with the principles. The levels of the ratings of acceptance for the major groups who responded are outlined in Graph 7.

Graph 7



COMPARATIVE VIEWS AND ISSUES

Of the largest groups responding, School Administrators had greater acceptance of the principles that teachers or the parent groups. However if the ratings of the parents other than the parents associated with the Language Development Centres are examined, their acceptance of the principles is similarly high.

In comparison to the other groups, the school administrators were very concerned regarding the resourcing of the implementation of the principles. Some also voiced concern regarding the impact of inclusion on teachers in mainstream settings.

Parents generally were most concerned about being involved in the decision making regarding their children and with the level of resourcing required to provide the level of support they felt their children required. There was a range of views regarding the setting for the provision of services, with many concerned that resources to current specialist facilities may suffer if the total level of resourcing is not sufficient.

A concern from many teachers in mainstream settings was that the inclusion of students with a disability into mainstream classes must be accompanied by appropriate support and resourcing so that education of other students is not compromised.

All groups saw a major need for training and development for all those involved the education of students with a disability, so that the appropriate programs could be delivered and the implementation of the principles could be achieved in a meaningful manner.

