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# **BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE WORKING PARTY ONE REPORT**

## **REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

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### **PRINCIPLE 1 All students have the right to enrol, access and participate in schooling that meets their individual needs**

The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- the right of students with disabilities to be enrolled, access and participate in schooling on the same basis as other students is recognised and practised;
- parents are partners in all aspects of the education process;
- information about schooling options and the range of services is comprehensive and accessible to allow for informed parental choice;
- enrolment procedures are collaborative, transparent and consistently applied;
- effective transitions are made during all phases of schooling;
- students with disabilities participate in an appropriate range of learning environments and achieve the learning outcomes described in the Curriculum Framework.

### **Scope**

The working party was required to formulate recommendations to:

- describe a framework to ensure Department of Education and Training policy, procedures and guidelines are consistent with the intent of relevant legislation;
- identify actions to be taken by the Department of Education and Training in order to address identified areas of need and priorities for work to be done.

### **Action**

The working party met on five occasions over a five-week period. The working party:

- undertook an analysis of the *School Education Act 1999, Disability*

*Discrimination Act 1992, Equal Opportunity Act 1984 and Disability Standards in Education Draft July 2002;*

- reviewed and modified the principle described in the Stage One Discussion Paper of the Review in order to improve clarity and eliminate the potential for discriminatory interpretation;
- developed a set of beliefs that underpin the intent of the vision for a more inclusive approach to schooling, with particular reference to students with disabilities;
- determined a set of actions to be undertaken by the Department of Education and Training to ensure it complies with legislation;
- developed a policy compliance framework that details compliance requirements for policies, procedures, guidelines and practices to ensure they are consistent with relevant legislation. The Department's *Enrolment and Students at Educational Risk* policies were tested against the policy compliance framework to demonstrate its capacity to meet its design intent.

## **Issues**

The working party identified and debated a number of issues that impact on an understanding of the intent and meaning behind the principle.

### *Social role valorisation*

This involves the concept that everyone has an inherent value and makes a contribution to their community. Enhancing the perceived value of the social roles of a person is called social role valorisation. There are two broad strategies for pursuing this goal: (a) enhancement of people's social image in the eyes of others, and (b) enhancement of their competencies, in the widest sense of the term.

Role valorising actions in the image enhancement or competency enhancement domains can be carried out on four distinct levels and sectors of social organization:

- the individual;
- the individual's primary social systems, such as the family;
- the intermediate level social systems of an individual or group, such as the neighbourhood, school, community, and services the person receives;
- the larger society, including the entire service system.

Role valorisation provides a high-level systematic framework to guide action. In addition it provides a coherent conceptual foundation for principles and strategies for shaping services and behaviours.

### *Enabling legislation*

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *School Education Act 1999* and the *Curriculum Council Act 1997* provide the legislative framework for an inclusive approach to schooling for all students in Western Australia. Students with disabilities have the same right to quality education as all other students including those with special educational needs.

### *Right of choice*

All parents of children with disabilities will have the opportunity to make application for enrolment in line with the principle that no child should be denied access to his or her local neighbourhood school. Parent decisions about where their child attends school needs to be meaningful, informed, real, respected and acted upon. They need to be aware of their right to advocate for the education that best suits their child's needs.

The Department will work with parents to support informed decision making by providing clear comprehensive information about the programs, services or supports available in government schools. Schools need to adopt open and accountable processes that enable unambiguous decisions. The links between educational choice and provision of support need to be clear. There will be an ongoing need to provide facilities, programmes and specialist services that are able to meet very high levels of educational need. The provision of services will be based on the level of educational need.

### *Adjustments*

The purpose of providing adjustments to the school and the learning environment for students who require teaching and learning adjustments is to ensure that, as far as possible and practicable, they have the same access to educational opportunities as other students and achieve optimal learning outcomes.

## **Policy compliance framework**

Enrolment in the Government school system is the right of all students. All students, including those with disabilities, have the right to access and participate in schooling which meets their individual needs.

### *Beliefs*

- students with disabilities bring valuable social, emotional and cultural benefits to a school;
- parents or caregivers have the right to choose the education that best suits their child's needs;
- enrolment processes must be non-discriminatory, open and transparent;
- parents or caregivers have the right and responsibility to be fully informed and participate with the school in making decisions relating to their child's education;
- a range of adjustments will be provided in all schools in order to maximise access, participation and achievement.

### *Modified indicators*

- the right of students with disabilities to be enrolled on the same basis as other students is recognised and practised;
- students with disabilities achieve the outcomes of the Curriculum Framework in the range of learning environments;
- parents are partners in all aspects of the education process;
- information about schooling options and the range of services is comprehensive and accessible to allow for informed parental choice;
- enrolment procedures are collaborative, transparent and consistently applied;
- effective transitions are made during all phases of schooling.

### *Protocols*

The following are tests that the system, schools and individuals are to use to examine, and where found wanting on one or more, to guide change to policies, procedures, guidelines and practices.

The policy, procedures, guidelines and/ or practice:

- applies to all students consistently and equitably;
- is written in consistent and easily understood language;
- recognises and supports the need for diversity in providing educational services for students;
- promotes an inclusive vision;
- is non-discriminatory;
- identifies resources and support mechanisms to assist schools and teachers;
- respects parents as partners in the decision–making processes for their child’s education;
- provides for an ongoing review of decisions;
- provides for a transparent, objective and accountable dispute resolution procedure;
- makes explicit reference to an accountability mechanism;
- is consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- is consistent with the *School Education Act 1999* and *Regulations 2000*.

### **Policies to be reviewed**

All Department of Education and Training policies, procedures and guidelines are to be reviewed in light of the policy compliance framework, commencing with the following considered by the working party to be priorities due to the implications for students with disabilities:

- Enrolment
- Behaviour Management in Schools
- Disability Advisory Panel
- School Discipline Advisory Panel
- Student Health Care
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Duty of Care for Students
- Child Protection
- Disputes and Complaints
- Attendance
- Students at Educational Risk
- Risk Management
- Excursions

- Water-based Excursions Procedures and Guidelines
- Primary and secondary school building briefs
- School Accountability Framework
- Curriculum Assessment and Reporting

### **Recommendations from working party 1**

- It is recommended that the Minister for Education reviews the *School Education Act 1999* and *Regulations 2000* to remove inconsistencies with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
- It is recommended that the Department of Education and Training:
  - adopt the policy compliance framework as set out;
  - review all policies, procedures, guidelines and practices in light of the framework, commencing with those listed in priority order;
  - overtly promote the statements of belief through policies, procedures, guidelines and practices;
  - develop and implement a communication strategy for the system, the school and wider community so as to reinforce a cultural shift to achieve the goals of inclusivity consistent with the beliefs outlined in the policy compliance framework;
  - support schools and their communities to promote equity;
  - will be accountable for inclusive practice;
  - establish a process to identify and resolve issues that affect the delivery of schooling for students with disabilities;
  - develop and implement a framework for resource allocation that will enable access and participation in accord with legislative requirements;
  - establish and publish a timeline, for the implementation of these recommendations.

Chair: Keith Newton  
 Executive Officer: Elizabeth Fairclough  
 September 2002