
BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE WORKING PARTY SEVEN REPORT

REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRINCIPLE 7 Services are provided and supported by collaborative models and partnerships

The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- service providers and educators work together to create seamless service delivery to students;
- schools engage in collaborative models to ensure effective responses to student needs;
- collaborative partnerships define responsibilities and expectations that are monitored and reviewed;
- protocols between service providers and the Department are ratified at the system level.

Scope

The working party was charged with formulating recommendations that would support:

- a set of principles to underpin protocols that will reflect collaborative partnerships and current departmental initiatives and strategies;
- design agreed frameworks that define roles, responsibilities and expectations of interested parties to ensure equity of service provision across diverse settings;
- recommend a process for monitoring and evaluating services provided that address system wide, individual and school characteristics.

Action

The working party met on four occasions over a five-week period and considered the implications of the principle.

The working party endorsed the Robson Taskforce recommendation 22, Community Links which focused on:

- developing protocols to facilitate collaborative partnerships with other agencies;
- defining roles, responsibilities and expectations of all interested parties to ensure equity of service provision;
- processes for monitoring and evaluating services that address student, school and system characteristics.

The Robson Taskforce recommended that in view of the effectiveness of locally co-ordinated government services in addressing the issues that affect children and their learning, the Department establish strong collaborative links with other government agencies, particularly Departments of Transport, Health, Training, Justice, Indigenous Affairs and WA Police Service, that provide services for children and young people so that programs and resources can be provided to schools in ways which support fully students and their families within their local communities (refer also to Robson Taskforce recommendation 40).

The working party endorsed recommendation 1 from the *Discussion Paper* of the Review: 'all subsequent work of the Review to examine educational services for students with disabilities within the broader context of the term, students with special educational needs.' This involves the promotion of a better understanding within the community about how society can build on and support the role that government schools play in achieving quality outcomes for all.

Issues

The working party identified a number of factors critical to the provision of quality services and effective partnerships. The focus of collaboration is achieving outcomes for the whole child:

- commitment to collaboration is based on the belief that working together will achieve more than if each partner works alone;
- collaboration works where the purpose is greater than the individual goals of each partner and where there is mutual agreement about those goals;
- collaboration requires both will and skill;

- strong leadership is required to demonstrate the will and strategies that are needed to build skills at all levels.

A collaborative framework for supporting students with special needs

The achievement of sound educational outcomes to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people is the responsibility of many partners. The sharing of information and coordinating services in a collaborative manner leads to improved outcomes for all children and young people. A collaborative approach brings families, schools and agencies together in such a way as to embrace new issues and better address children and young peoples' needs in the short and long term.

The following principles should be considered in developing agreements:

- all partnerships are developed through a comprehensive consultative process with all partners;
- collaboration is achieved through shared vision, clear processes, good will, respecting different roles, contributions and constraints of all partners;
- all partnership agreements are:
 - comprehensive;
 - written in simple language;
 - readily available;
 - regularly reviewed;
 - disseminated to all partners.
- open and accountable processes and procedures are required for information sharing.

Recommendations from working party 7

It is recommended that:

- interagency agreements be based on information from system, district and school level and the principles of the collaborative framework;
- agreements are:
 - ratified at the highest level;
 - systematically implemented;
 - formally reviewed.
- a communication strategy for the recommendations of the working party is identified and implemented;

- specific mechanisms are implemented at system, district education office and school levels to actively engage parents representing the full range of student needs;
- an awareness package and training program is developed to inform parents of the range of needs of young people with special educational needs and the services available to them within schools;
- a clear process is communicated and made available to parents which allows them to voice any concerns that they may have in relation to the services provided for their child;
- a communication strategy involving the use of the Regulatory Framework, a website and the collaborative framework is implemented and widely disseminated for the full range of stakeholders;
- specific mechanisms are implemented at the system level within the Department and across agencies where committees are chaired by a district education officer, eg. District Director, and established to ensure that interagency collaboration occurs;
- options are investigated that could occur across agencies at system, district and school level to enhance collaboration eg: budget sharing, co-location, secondment, professional development across agencies, induction of all staff;
- interagency agreements and processes are examined in the quality assurance processes with Directors. Ideally the process would involve interagency officers in the collaborative review of outcomes from such agreements;
- targeted funding is utilized to ensure skills for collaboration are developed with the school, community and partners to improve outcomes for students;
- the role of the case manager is crucial to ensure effectiveness of interagency collaboration; this function and necessary tools need to be resourced appropriately at the school level;
- interagency agreements and processes are examined in the quality assurance process of principals and schools.

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