

building inclusive schools



pathways to the future



Department of
Education
and Training

**a report of the review of
educational services for
students with disabilities
in government schools**

a summary

TITLE: Pathways to the Future: A Report of the Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools: A Summary

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Foreword

Pathways to the Future: A Report of the Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools presents a strong foundation upon which the Government and the Department of Education and Training can build safe, inclusive and engaging learning environments, thus meeting our commitments to students in government schools. The findings and recommendations of this Review identify emerging themes that have relevance for every school and all educators and members of the community.

The implementation of these recommendations will involve comprehensive planning and take time to achieve. There are recommendations that address culture, decision making, provision of resources and effective teaching and learning. All recommendations support quality educational practice and reflect the intent expressed by contributors to the Review.

I am confident that this report presents quality information and describes pathways to the future for the Department of Education and Training. The recommendations identify actions that will support quality learning opportunities for all students, in particular, those with disabilities and other educational needs.

I am pleased to be able to present this report to the Minister for Education and Training and look forward to achieving the inclusive education system described within it.



PAUL ALBERT
DIRECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

February 2004





Overview of the Report of the Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools

Chapter 1 Pathways to the future

In April 2001, the Hon Minister for Education, Alan Carpenter, MLA, announced a comprehensive review of educational services for students with disabilities (K-12) in government schools (the Review).

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Students with disabilities constitute 3 - 4 % of the total student population in Western Australian government schools. The majority of these students attend local neighbourhood schools with differing provision of resources, services or supports to the student and the school. During the Review the educational needs of students with disabilities have been considered in the context of other students who have identified educational needs including learning difficulties and a range of learning impairments. This shift in focus recognised that there are students who need adjustments to their teaching and learning program who do not necessarily have identified disabilities.

The Review has provided an opportunity to evaluate current educational provision for students with identified needs, identify quality practice and make recommendations for further development of an increasingly inclusive government school system. The findings and recommendations of the Review are therefore relevant to every school in the state, every educator and all members of the community. Since the commencement of the Review the Department of Education and Training has been established. Although the findings and recommendations have significant implications for schools, all sectors of the Department will need to consider their implications.

Chapter 2 Describing Inclusive Education

An inclusive education system reflects the beliefs and practices of educational communities regarding the provision of quality education for all students. The concept of inclusivity is firmly embedded within the *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* (1998). The seven principles and indicators of this Review provide a cohesive planning framework for the Department and support inclusive education.

Teaching and learning adjustments provide students with equitable educational opportunities. Providing teaching and learning adjustments for an individual or group of students is integral to outcomes focused education and enables students to participate in appropriate educational programs. The development of outcomes focused education is of particular relevance to students with disabilities to ensure they experience success and achieve optimal learning outcomes.

In order to identify the scope, intensity and duration of the teaching and learning adjustments that are needed by students, an assessment tool to identify educational needs will be developed. Both the individual needs of students and the school context in which teaching and learning occurs are significant when identifying educational needs. Documenting educational needs and planning for adjustments will help determine the provision of resources, services and supports to schools while promoting effective, appropriate and engaging learning environments.

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Recommendations

1. The Department of Education and Training adopts the principles of the Review and makes them explicit in all strategic planning to achieve inclusive practice.
2. The Department of Education and Training adopts the term *teaching and learning adjustments* to inform educational planning and provision of services and resources for students.

Chapter 3 Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Educational leadership and quality teaching are critical elements in the creation of inclusive learning environments for students. Effective school leaders and educators take responsibility for the overall quality of the learning program for all students. Expanding the capacity of all personnel to meet the needs of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments has been recognised as a key component of the comprehensive Building Inclusive Schools professional learning strategy.

Every school needs access to specialist knowledge or expertise relating to educational provision for students with specific educational needs, particularly those with disabilities. Appropriate educational programs need to incorporate the evidence-based models of teaching and learning that are central to the achievement of optimal learning outcomes. The establishment of school-based learning support teams, with a coordinator, will encourage all teachers to participate in collaborative problem solving and provide timely access to support and advice within the local school setting.

The ability to make judgments about educational progress of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments and the manner in which achievement can be demonstrated will become increasingly important. Demonstration of accountability for student progress and achievement will be strengthened when the Department sets requirements and standards for documenting an individual student's educational needs, the achievement of learning outcomes and the provision of appropriate adjustments. The Curriculum Improvement Program provides opportunities to consider curriculum, assessment and reporting practices, materials and policy in terms of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.

Recommendations

3. School leadership and management practices that facilitate the development of inclusive learning environments are promoted.
4. The capacity of teachers to meet the needs of a diverse range of students is strengthened by developing pedagogy to support inclusive practice and the establishment of learning support teams.


5. An ongoing professional learning program is developed within the context of curriculum improvement and implemented to expand the capacity of all Department of Education and Training personnel to meet the needs of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.
6. The Department of Education and Training specifies its recommendations to pre-service institutions in the development of pedagogy to support inclusive practice.
7. Curriculum, assessment and reporting materials, strategies and policy are refined in order to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate the outcomes achieved across learning areas.

Chapter 4 Structuring Inclusive Schools

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The Department currently provides a variety of educational programs and services to meet the needs of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments. Throughout the Review there has been significant acknowledgement of the specialist educational programs and services developed in response to identified needs of students, schools or districts. Submissions and working party discussions supported ongoing development of inclusive educational programs and services in response to local needs. This would enable all students to participate in appropriate educational programs within their local school community wherever possible.

In order for all schools to be provided with support services that are responsive, flexible and focused on the changing needs of schools and students, it is proposed that a regular cycle of review and evaluation be established. Findings of this Review supported the development of consistent frameworks to guide evaluation and review processes. The educational outcomes achieved as well as the effectiveness of specialist services and supports need to be made explicit. Information regarding the specialist services provided by the Department, other government departments and community agencies is an integral component of this process. The evidence gathered will identify priorities and inform decisions regarding the provision of educational services and supports to schools and students.



The physical environments of schools will be evaluated and when necessary, modified to meet contemporary building standards and community expectations. Students' physical access requirements should not be a barrier to enrolment or educational opportunities. Inclusive campuses are proposed as an integral component of the development of inclusive schools. An inclusive campus consists of adjoining facilities with shared use of space and physical environments. Specialist facilities will be built as part of an inclusive campus to facilitate quality and appropriate educational programs for students with the most intensive educational, physical or health care needs. It is acknowledged that considerable forward planning will be necessary to ensure that existing schools are modified and that new schools are able to meet the needs of students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments.

Recommendations

8. Services, programs and facilities, including specialist facilities for students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments, are provided within the principles of inclusive education.
9. Planning and design of schools will support inclusive practices through a staged capital works program.
10. A framework for ongoing review and evaluation is implemented to ensure coordinated and effective educational provision for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.
11. Educational provision and planning to meet the needs of a diverse range of students is informed by the practice of earliest possible intervention at all phases of schooling.
12. The Department of Education and Training develops a framework to guide and inform the negotiation of agreements with service providers in meeting the needs of a diverse range of students.

Chapter 5 Resourcing Inclusive Schools

Resources mean not only what is available in the financial budget, but also the human, physical and social capital that exists in schools. In order to provide innovative and effective educational programs, schools need to transform financial resources into authentic inclusive educational supports for students. Encouraging schools in this endeavour necessitates a reconsideration of the resources available and the mechanisms for allocating resources to schools.

The Review articulated matters to be considered in the development of equitable, efficient and responsive processes for resource provision to schools. This included streamlining information gathering and establishing processes for recording this data. Localised decision making, validation and moderation processes will support school and district responsiveness to student needs.

It is proposed that the Department adopts educational needs as the foundation for identifying the teaching and learning adjustments required. This will involve the development of an educational needs assessment tool that becomes integral to the allocation of resources. Such an emphasis will facilitate resource provision that is equitable and not determined by disability or school type. Providing every school with the ability and flexibility to respond to the educational needs of all students is crucial.

The Department needs to maintain a balance between allocating resources based on individual student needs and resourcing the school as a whole. Further analysis of current funding arrangements and resource provision is necessary. This will provide an evidence base for implementing change. Unless complementary and transparent funding programs are established, there will be increased pressure to identify students as being eligible for direct or targeted provision of resources. Commitment to continue to provide direct or targeted resources for those students who require significant teaching and learning adjustments was identified as central to an approach based upon educational needs.



Recommendations

13. An educational needs model of resource allocation is adopted to ensure students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments have equitable and flexible access to resources.
14. Moderation, review and decision making regarding resource allocation for students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments is carried out as close as possible to schools.
15. Current arrangements are examined and more effective strategies for the provision of financial resources to schools are developed.

Chapter 6 Supporting Inclusive Schools

Commonwealth and State legislation relating to the delivery of schooling and disability discrimination provide the framework for the development of appropriate educational provision for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments. Schools have a responsibility to take action to meet students' educational needs within clear policy expectations. Quality and readily accessible information helps create shared understandings and sets explicit parameters regarding decision making to support the provision of appropriate education and teaching and learning adjustments for students.

Parents and educators working with students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments have a mutual interest in and commitment to school improvement because of the benefits that emerge for these students. An effective school establishes a climate and ethos that strengthens the inclusive nature of the school and offers support and educational opportunities to students, educators and other members of the school community.

The challenge for the Department is to integrate required actions and obligations identified within legislation and the strategic development of processes, programs and policies to support an inclusive school system.

Recommendations

16. Quality information is provided to school communities to facilitate effective decision making to improve outcomes for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.
17. The *School Education Act 1999* and *Regulations 2000* are reviewed to ensure consistency with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
18. All policies and procedures of the Department of Education and Training are reviewed to ensure compliance with legislation and the incorporation of the principles of inclusive education.

Chapter 7 Sustaining Inclusive Schools

Developing an inclusive education system requires that changes in the education environment are anticipated in order to facilitate rapid and flexible responses to student, school and community needs. Data collection concerning the effectiveness of resource use and school and student performance needs to reflect strong commitment to teaching and learning.

Ongoing improvement in the equitable provision of appropriate resources and services to support inclusive education for all students is necessary. Establishing a Department taskforce with appropriate expertise will support a systematic approach to implementing changes. This would ensure that schools are supported in providing programs that address the educational needs of all students, including those who require teaching and learning adjustments.


Recommendations

19. A process is developed to monitor and evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the recommendations of this Review.
20. A taskforce is established to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of this Review.

The Seven Principles of Inclusive Education



From the issues identified in Stage 1 of the Review, seven principles of quality inclusive education and indicators were developed. They describe the characteristics of an education system that would deliver quality services, programs and support for students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments.



The principles are inexorably linked. They identify clear commitments from enrolment through to informed decision making regarding educational planning and provision. This means access to appropriate teaching and learning adjustments and collaborative support of a seamless delivery of services that respond to individual needs. Widespread positive endorsement for the seven principles and their indicators was received across all respondent groups.

PRINCIPLE 1 **Providing access and participation**

All students have the right to enrol, access and participate in schooling which meets their individual needs

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. 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.

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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.



PRINCIPLE 2 Valuing diversity

All levels of the system value diversity and operate within an inclusive framework

The Department will support all personnel to develop inclusive practices. Comprehensive professional learning will support the development of an inclusive education system that values and recognises the diversities within all school communities.

The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

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- school communities value diversity;
- educators have the awareness and confidence to support students who require teaching and learning adjustments;
- educational leaders take a proactive role in advocating and ensuring equity for all students;
- schools develop and adopt inclusive pedagogical and cultural practices.

PRINCIPLE 3 Ensuring local decisions and adjustments

A range of effective and appropriate adjustments is provided to ensure access, participation and achievement

Schools will be able to select and adopt services, supports and programs for students within the context of the local school community. Effective use of resources and supports will enable schools to better meet student needs through the creation of flexible learning environments.

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The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- adjustments are informed through collaboration with parents and other relevant stakeholders;
- students' views are sought and are reflected in the educational program;
- adjustments are made at the whole school, classroom and individual levels and are regularly monitored and reviewed;
- decisions about adjustments are made, where possible, at the local level;
- adjustments are culturally sensitive and minimise discrimination;
- adjustments are recorded within a documented educational program as part of a broader accountability framework.



PRINCIPLE 4 **Implementing a new framework for resource allocation**

**Adjustments are provided on a needs basis
and are equitably resourced**

Resources will be allocated more equitably, removing inconsistencies in the nature of services or supports provided to schools and districts for students requiring significant teaching and learning adjustments. Resourcing will reflect the nature and intensity of the teaching and learning adjustments required to enable students to access the curriculum.

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The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- a consistent and coordinated system-wide procedure for the identification of students who require teaching and learning adjustments is in place;
- all stakeholders contribute to the identification and assessment of students' learning needs;
- an allocative mechanism based on educational need provides resourcing for appropriate adjustments;
- schools are supported to be flexible in planning and implementing appropriate programs for students who require teaching and learning adjustments;
- schools demonstrate accountability in the use of allocated resources.

PRINCIPLE 5 Matching pedagogy with student needs

The system supports the development of pedagogy to meet individual student needs

The Department aims to ensure that quality practice standards will be applied to the development of educational provision for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments. A sustained program of appropriate curriculum and ongoing support for teachers will promote the development of more effective pedagogical practice. Disseminating new initiatives and practices across the system will promote quality educational provision for all students.

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The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- evidence-based, effective models of teaching and learning for all students with disabilities are identified, promoted and implemented;
- benchmarks for effective teaching and learning practices are identified, promoted and implemented throughout the system;
- implementation and ongoing evaluation of effective teaching and learning practices are supported by the system;
- partnerships with training providers are formed to ensure best quality pre-service and in-service training.



PRINCIPLE 6 **Delivering responsive programs and services**

The range of coordinated programs and services provided is flexible and delivered according to student needs

Providing a range of programs, services and specialist facilities will ensure that the needs of students are met and that appropriate supports are put in place to ensure access to meaningful learning environments and experiences. The need to tailor educational programs to meet the changing needs of students, and the critical importance of early intervention at all phases of schooling in achieving optimal educational outcomes, is promoted.

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The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- individual student needs are identified and responded to through a range of co-ordinated services and supports;
- support services respond to local school community contexts;
- school-based interventions are implemented as early as possible;
- services and supports are reviewed regularly to acknowledge changing school community and student needs;
- system initiatives are monitored and reviewed.



PRINCIPLE 7 Collaborating for better outcomes

Services are provided and supported by collaborative models and partnerships

Strong links between the Department and other professionals providing services and supports for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments will be fostered. Efficient case management practices will ensure collaboration between all parties and use of quality information to inform educational planning for each student.

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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.