Inclusion is about creating a ​

better world for everyone.​

What is inclusive education?

Inclusive education is about everyone learning and growing up together – in all our diversity. Every Queensland student is entitled to attend their local neighbourhood school, and research overwhelmingly shows us that general education settings benefit all learners. In this short video, I am going to tell you about what inclusive education is, why it is important for every child to be included, and how you can advocate for your child to be included in the regular local school if your child has a disability or diagnosis.

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. This means physical, social and curriculum inclusion is provided for all learners.

Why is inclusion important?

Every child benefits from inclusion, regardless of their ability or background. 50 years of research has found that inclusive education provides the best academic and social outcomes for all learners, along with better long-term outcomes for employment, independence & social belonging. A school community learns to value diversity and difference, and inclusive schools create the foundation for inclusive communities.

Inclusion is best for a child with a disability, as well as for the children without disabilities who are learning alongside them. The United Nations’ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have stated that inclusive education is the human right of every child, and the way children with disabilities can access other human rights, like not ending up in poverty, and being able to participate fully in their local community.

In Australia, there are the Disability Standards for Education, which set out the obligations of schools towards students with disability, so students do not experience discrimination. In Queensland, there is also an Inclusive Education policy - you can find out more about this on the Queensland Department of Education’s website. The Department commits to all children and young people in Queensland, regardless of their backgrounds, identities or abilities, to attend their local school and be welcomed, fully engaged in the curriculum alongside their similar aged peers, learn in a safe and supportive environment, and achieve academically and socially with reasonable adjustments and supports.

What can you do to advocate for your child’s inclusive education?

Historically, the ‘special’ separate education path has been the default for children with disability. So it will be helpful for you to be prepared to advocate for school inclusion for your child – rather than thinking it will “just happen”. Even though there is research, legislation and policy supporting inclusive education, some people in our society will not know about these. They may hold old non-factual ideas, like that a child with disability holds the other students back. They may believe that a child with disability needs to be in a separate school from other children to be safe, or that a special separate education is what they need in order to learn.

It will be important for you to know about the evidence and laws that protect your child’s right to attend school and to be supported to succeed. It will be important that you have a clear vision of what you want for your child and why it is important to you they are included in all of life, starting with school. Being clear and confident about your expectations can help others to understand your family’s goals for your child’s inclusion.

When having conversations with schools, try your best to be warm and approachable, building relationships as you go. Speak about your child with enthusiasm and positivity. Introduce them as the valuable class member they will be! Your child is an individual, so share their passions and interests, and their strengths. When talking about their challenges, don’t dwell on deficits or diagnoses, but instead offer suggestions about how teachers can get the best out of your child each day.

Connecting with ‘peer support’, with other parents on an inclusive education path with their child, can help you feel stronger when you face any barriers or challenges. Knowing that real inclusion is possible will also help you to be a stronger advocate. You can find out more about advocating for your child’s inclusive education at cru.org.au/our-work/inclusive-education

All children deserve a quality education, and the opportunity to develop friendships and belonging in their community. The best way to achieve this is with their peers, at their local regular school.