

Embracing diversity

Schools which embrace diversity support every student, with their many different backgrounds, interests, needs and abilities. Here are some ways a school community can demonstrate that it embraces diversity, consistent with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

What can you learn without visiting the school?

- There is a clearly visible mission statement or policy which explicitly supports diversity.
- The Principal and staff promote diversity through written material – e.g. annual reports, school newsletters, websites.

When you visit the school

- The Principal / Director is welcoming and encouraging.
- All staff members are warm, friendly, respectful, and welcoming.
- Enrolment materials are offered.
- Students and families are encouraged to raise any questions or concerns about the enrolment process.
- Students and families are provided with information to assist them in advocating for their educational needs.

Talking about disability generally

- Person-first language is used, which focuses on the person rather than the disability (e.g. *Sam is a student with autism*, and not *Sam is an autistic student*).
- People speak directly to the student with disability, using age-appropriate vocabulary and tone, rather than through another person.

Talking about your particular situation

- Staff members are willing to learn more about the needs of students with a particular disability, and are willing to seek advice from others – inside and outside the school – to support their learning.
- Staff members are willing to discuss adjustments to teaching and learning programs so that individual students with different needs can learn and demonstrate their learning in ways which suit them.
- Staff members offer or are willing to consider development of a personalised learning plan.
- Conversations are based on what students are able to do and what they need to support their participation and continue their learning, rather than on what they are not able to do.
- Discussions about sensitive issues – such as personal care and medical needs – are held in private and only with those who need to know.

- Input is sought from students and parents about the students' interests, strengths and needs.
- Students and families are invited to attend and contribute to meetings to plan for enrolment, participation and learning.
- Students with disability are supported in communicating their own thoughts, needs, opinions and wishes.
- Clear communication channels are set up between school and home.

School activities and capability

- The school collaborates with other specialist service providers – such as occupational therapists, or speech therapists – which may be of assistance to students with disability.
- Provision of specialist services to support education can be accommodated in the school's schedule.
- Learning support staff and/or learning support specialists work in a coordinated way with classroom teachers.
- There are structured activities at lunchtime to facilitate the construction of social networks which include all students.
- All students follow the same curriculum.
- Staff make adjustments to classrooms and lessons so that students with disability can participate in the same learning activities as other students.
- There is a variety of materials and activities available to engage students with different interests, needs and abilities.
- Staff have scheduled time available to plan specifically for personalised learning.
- The school is physically accessible. All students have access to specialist facilities such as libraries, art rooms, music rooms, science and technology laboratories, etc.
- There are quiet areas to which students can retreat if they are feeling sensory overload.
- There are no areas which are for students with disability only.

Learning from the experience of other students with disability

- There are other students with disability attending the school.
- Students with disability are involved in the same school clubs and extracurricular activities as students without disability.
- Students with disability participate in all activities inside and outside the classroom (e.g. assemblies, school performances, excursions, sports carnivals).