Principles of Inclusion
for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

The majority of children with a disability in South Australian schools attend mainstream schools and while the importance of inclusive practices at schools is being increasingly recognised, there is inconsistency in their application across educational settings.

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013

Purpose

The purpose of the principles is to:

- promote equity, access, opportunity and the rights of children and students with disability in education and care
- contribute to reducing discrimination against children and students with disability where they are treated less fairly than their peers
- provide early childhood education and care centres (early childhood) and schools with broad and consistent criteria for inclusion so that they assess their progress towards inclusion
- provide early childhood and school sectors with broad and consistent criteria to assess their progress towards inclusion.

Inclusive practices not only benefit children and students living with disability, they benefit everyone. Inclusive education builds the capacity of early childhood centres and schools to educate and support all students and contributes to stronger school communities.

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1 ‘Early childhood’ centres incorporates child care centres, early learning centres, kindergartens, schools with preschools and out of school hours care (OSHC) centres.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

Preamble

The principles were developed at the request of the Minister for Education and Child Development by the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Children and Students with Disability (MAC: CSWD) for all sectors of education in South Australia in 2017.

The Principles have been endorsed by the Department for Education and Child Development, Catholic Education South Australia and the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia.

According to the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR):

Inclusive education is a process that recognises (a) the obligation to eliminate barriers that restrict or ban participation and (b) the need to change culture, policy and practice for mainstream schools to accommodate the needs of all students, including those (experiencing) disability.  


Australian and South Australian government legislation reflects the principles of the United Nations conventions on the rights of persons and children experiencing disability through the following Acts and standards:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005: On the same basis (Cth)
- Disability Services Act (SA) 1993
- Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA)
- South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (EOA)
- Education Act (SA) 1972.

The legislation reflects the principles of the United Nations Conventions on the rights of persons and children experiencing disability to an inclusive education.

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 specify how education and training are to be made accessible to students who live with disability. The standards cover the following areas:

- enrolment
- participation
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment and victimisation.

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The principles

All children and students who experience disability have the right to access and participate in education.

All children and students who experience disability have the ability to learn and the right to exercise their voice, choice and control in managing their own educational experiences.

All children and students who experience disability have the right to develop to their fullest potential and to be active, valued citizens in the community.

Teachers, early childhood education and care centre and school communities and the parents/carers/advocates of children and students who experience disability have the responsibility for taking action for inclusive behaviour in their education and care setting.

All children and students who experience disability have the right to an appropriate and adequate allocation of resources to enable their right to access and participate meaningfully in education.

All children and students who experience disability, their parents/carers/advocates, teachers and members of the early childhood education and care centre and school communities have the right to be safe – physically, emotionally, culturally and socially and to be treated respectfully.

All children and students who experience disability, their parents/carers/advocates, teachers and members of the school community have the responsibility to operate within the legal framework provided by the Australian and South Australian governments.
All children and students who experience disability have the right to access and participate in education

Children and students who experience disability are included in education by an environment that allows access on the same basis as children and students who do not experience disability.

This can be achieved by due consideration and action to:

- enrolment and transition processes
- participation in educational, social, cultural and physical activities; on and off site
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- providing adequate and quality student support services
- creating an environment that embraces diversity and supports, respect and harmony
- using the flexibility in curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks of the Australian Curriculum to cater for the diverse needs of children and students living with disability.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

The principles (continued)

All children and students who experience disability have the ability to learn and the right to exercise their voice, choice and control in managing their own educational experiences.

Children and students who experience disability are included in education by everyone acknowledging that all children, students and adults have a diverse range of ability. The focus needs to be on the whole person.

This can be achieved by:

- recognising that each child and student has their own aspirations, learning needs, strengths and interests
- setting high expectations for achievement
- providing personalised learning and targeted support
- developing individual educational pathways
- providing voice and choice in learning experiences and wellbeing
- accommodating the needs of individuals
- appropriate review and assessment of the child or student’s disability to support their educational needs
- effective consultation through meaningful participation by all contributors and recognition of the input of all participants; the student, their family or carer, school personnel, other professionals and other relevant people
- recognising and respecting that children and students living with disability are experts in their own lives and their lived experience.
The principles (continued)

All children and students who experience disability have the right to develop to their fullest potential and to be active, valued citizens in the community.

Children and students who experience disability are included in education by being given the opportunity to thrive.

This can be achieved by:

- safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all children and students
- promoting engaged civics and citizenship through education and awareness raising
- making reasonable adjustments where required
- understanding the reasons and triggers for a child or student’s behaviour and adjusting responses and actions accordingly for the use of least restrictive practices.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Restrictive practice is any practice, device or action that removes another person’s freedom or interferes with another person’s ability to make a decision. This includes detention, seclusion, exclusion, and aversive, chemical, physical and mechanical restraint (Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, July 2013).
The principles (continued)

Teachers, early childhood education and care centre and school communities and the parents/carers/advocates of children and students who experience disability have the responsibility for taking action for inclusive behaviour in their care and education setting.

Children and students learn to be inclusive when they observe and are encouraged and supported to participate in inclusive behaviour and practice.

The responsibility for inclusive behaviour and building inclusive practices at the early childhood centre or school rests with those who have been given authority for the site. All adults on site must be accountable for their own inclusive behaviours and those of others. Inclusive behaviour by anyone and everyone encourages inclusive practice by others, creating a feedback loop for inclusive behaviour to be reinforced.

This can be achieved by:

- taking action to advocate for, facilitate and foster inclusive behaviour
- facilitation by leaders and educators of conversations and learning experiences on diversity and inclusivity with children and students
- enabling individuals to learn how to reflect and monitor their actions to become self-aware and self-manage
- relationships that are characterised by trust, a commitment to excellence and positive outcomes, respectful, collaborative, agreeing to disagree, if necessary, reciprocal and comfortable even when dealing with difficult issues and situations
- meaningful and clear communications
- effective consultation through considered participation by all involved – the student, their family or carer, school personnel, other professionals and other relevant people and recognition of their input
- taking appropriate action when children and students experiencing disability are excluded.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

The principles (continued)

All children and students who experience disability have the right to an appropriate and adequate allocation of resources to enable their right to access and participate in education.

Children and students who experience disability are included in education by allocation of resources to create a physical, social, cultural and educational environment accessible to all.

This can be achieved by:

- considering the full suite of applicable resources and supports and making evidenced-based decisions on the choices available
- staff, school support officers (SSOs)⁴ and pre-service teachers seeking and being given appropriate and relevant training and professional development and ongoing support from leadership (sector and/or site)
- including the ‘principles of universal design’⁵ when considering capital expenditure
- providing educators and staff with time and professional learning opportunities drawn from the learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curricula priorities of the Australian Curriculum that cater for the diverse needs of children and students living with disability.

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⁴ SSOs can also be referred to as educational support officers, teacher aides, paraprofessionals, paraeducators, teaching assistants, and early childhood workers in the early childhood education sector

⁵ Universal Design is the process of designing products and environments to be used by everyone to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. The aim of Universal Design is to provide one solution that can accommodate all people, including people with disability, as well as the rest of the community. There are no universal designs and there are no universally designed products. Universal design is a continuous improvement process in the design of products and environments. Effective building practices for children and students with disability (http://www.universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/)
**Principles of Inclusion** for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

The principles *(continued)*

All children and students who experience disability, their parents/carers/advocates, teachers and members of the early childhood education and care centre and school communities have the right to be safe – physically, emotionally, culturally and socially and to be treated respectfully.

Children and students who experience disability are included in education when there is a safe environment and respect for the dignity of everyone involved.

*This can be achieved by:*

- creating an environment that is free from violence, abuse, neglect, harassment and victimisation
- incorporating experiential learning for linguistic and cultural diversity and the identity of self
- providing a stimulating learning environment for children and students to explore and build on their talents and achieve relevant learning outcomes
- taking deliberate and proactive steps to protect and enhance the wellbeing and rights of children
- reporting and monitoring against the child or student’s strengths based personalised learning plan
- compliance with relevant legislation.
**Principles of Inclusion** for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

**The principles (continued)**

All children and students who experience disability, their parents/carers/advocates, teachers and members of the school community have the responsibility to operate within the legal frameworks provided by the Australian and South Australian governments.

Children and students who experience disability are included in education through compliance with the:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005: On the same basis (Cth)*
- *Disability Services Act (SA) 1993*
- *Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA)*
- *South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (EOA)*
- *Relevant education sector policies and guidelines.*

This can be achieved by:

- leadership disseminating information in a timely and practical manner
- engaging with staff in regular, ongoing professional development on the meaning and implications of the legislation and their responsibilities.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

Inclusion recognised in practice

The following should be applied to the context and circumstances of each early childhood centre and school while adhering to requisite legislation, education sector guidelines and mandated standards. There may be other indicators not mentioned here that are particular to a site and/or sector.

It is noted that how to measure and record inclusion is work in progress, and that being inclusive requires conscious effort.

Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:

1. leadership action is visible eg:
   - staff recognise that their early childhood and school and sector leaders are being inclusive
   - the leadership team communicates to staff that they are expected and encouraged to apply inclusive education practices
   - staff are aware of and adhere to all relevant legislation, including Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA), Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth) and Section 74 of the South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984
   - promises of action are fulfilled
   - feedback received from members of the whole school community is more of what works well rather than what does not work
   - participation in professional development is recognised, rewarded, and supports career development, eg it can be credited towards qualifications and linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers/Professional Standard for Principals
   - enrolment processes are concise, clear, transparent and in plain language for all involved
   - site staff collaborate with leaders, early childhood centre and school staff and families/carers and allied health staff
   - trainee/pre-service teachers on placement are inducted on the early childhood centre’s or school’s inclusion principles and practice

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Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA), Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth) Section 74 of the South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (EOA) all make it unlawful for an educational institution to discriminate on the grounds of disability.

From 2017 DECD forums held with parents/carers/advocates of children and students experiencing disability.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

Inclusion recognised in practice (continued)

Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:

2 an early childhood centre/school audit is a measure of continuous improvement by providing data of current practice and achievement towards goals in terms of the Disability Standards of Education (DSE) 2005:
   - enrolment
   - participation
   - curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
   - student support services
   - elimination of harassment and victimisation

3 there is acknowledgement and celebration by:
   - displaying the Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care and regularly referring to them
   - publicising success and learnings on inclusive behaviour and practice
   - highlighting successful transition of all children and students within a site and/or another site
   - inclusion of celebratory days eg International Day of People with Disability,\(^8\) 3 December in the calendar of the early childhood centre or school, or nominating to the National Disability Awards
   - displays of student work, eg artwork that shows the diversity, capacities, strengths and aspirations and achievements of members of the school community
   - displays of resources of the site or sector that reflect the diversity within society eg library books or texts
   - welcoming and including families/carers and facilitating their connection with their school community

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\(^8\) The choice to focus on the person is inherent in both phrases, ‘people with disability’ and ‘people experiencing disability’. The latter enforces the social imposition of disability.
**Principles of Inclusion** for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

**Inclusion recognised in practice (continued)**

Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:

4. **social and emotional skills are developed, as witnessed by:**
   - visitors’ comments on the pleasant, calm but vibrant atmosphere of the site
   - the planned intentional use of break-out rooms for a particular educational outcome(s) and to support individual learning needs
   - practices, evidence-informed and planned, that employ least restrictive practices
   - planned and informal contact between teachers, SSOs and specialist staff to develop plans for student outcomes
   - children and students are happily collaborating, socialising and getting along together
   - absence of bullying
   - focused and engaged children and students
   - achievement and attainment of personal goals

5. **educational goals are tailored for each child and student:**
   - by negotiating a personalised, strengths-based learning plan in a timely and collaborative process with parents/carers and child/student and with all those involved eg teachers, SSOs, allied health professionals
   - when minds are open to all possible solutions and compromise, when necessary
   - by using the flexibility in curriculum frameworks and designing syllabuses, programs and lesson plans to cater for the diverse needs of children and students living with disability
   - by using the flexibility in assessment and reporting frameworks to design processes that enable participation and attainment for children and students living with disability
   - when the education and development plan focuses on learning and is well documented, reviewed regularly by all involved and goes with the child or student when transitioning within a site or externally to another site
   - when their education and development plan is out of the filing drawer with a used appearance or when the e-copy of the plan is annotated
   - so every child or student can participate in the full range of activities including off-site
   - for achievement and attainment of high educational expectations and their own goals
   - by provision of opportunities for children and students to actively engage in and reflect upon linguistic and cultural diversity, and to consider their own linguistic, social and cultural practices and identities

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9 Restrictive practice is any practice, device or action that removes another person’s freedom or interferes with another person’s ability to make a decision. This includes detention, seclusion, exclusion, and aversive, chemical, physical and mechanical restraint (Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, July 2013).
**Principles of Inclusion** for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

**Inclusion recognised in practice** *(continued)*

*Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:*

6 **families/carers and children and students are:**
- actively listened to and their voices heard and acted upon
- giving feedback to members of the whole school community that is more of what works well rather than what is not working\(^{10}\)
- provided with adequate and accurate information, eg the Disability Standards for Education, in a timely manner
- involved in the developmental and educational planning and supported to do so
- seen working and collaborating with teachers, SSOs and specialised staff to build a shared vision
- provided with alternatives when one option is not possible
- receiving feedback and updates without prompt

7 **staff:**
- receive feedback from members of the whole school community is more of what works well rather than what does not work
- are given time to engage in critical reflection about beliefs and practices and incorporate these into their portfolio of work for maintaining accreditation against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers/Professional Standard for Principals
- approach each planning meeting with a mind open to all possible solutions
- collaborate with children and students, carers and advocates to build a shared vision for that child or student
- are supported by and accommodating of allied health support workers on site

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\(^{10}\) From 2017 DECD forums held with parents/carers/advocates of children and students experiencing disability.
**Principles of Inclusion** for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

**Inclusion recognised in practice** (continued)

Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:

8 physical access accommodates the whole school community:
- when a visitor to the early childhood centre or school compliments the site on how easy it is to find their way around
- by the application of Universal Design and its seven principles
- where design features provide choice and freedom for children and students and allows them independence and opportunities to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour using least restrictive practices
- by the use of Wayfinding systems that provides directional cues such as signage, colours, symbols, logical connecting pathways and sensory methods that help everyone to navigate their facility independently and with minimum anxiety
- when appropriate spaces are designed and made available to accommodate individual needs and means of learning

9 school communications (internal and/or external) include:
- success and achievements of a diverse range of students using the full range of available communication formats eg websites, print and electronic newsletters, social media
- student successes and achievements, volunteered by their peers
- staff successes and professional development experiences and learnings on inclusion and disability
- displays of success and successful people are visible on site
- the use of plain English and are W3C compliant

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11 Universal Design is the process of designing products and environments to be used by everyone to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. The aim of Universal Design is to provide one solution that can accommodate all people, including people with disability, as well as the rest of the community. There are no universal designs and there are no universally designed products. Universal design is a continuous improvement process in the design of products and environments. ([http://www.universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/](http://www.universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/))

12 Restrictive practice is any practice, device or action that removes another person's freedom or interferes with another person's ability to make a decision. This includes detention, seclusion, exclusion, and aversive, chemical, physical and mechanical restraint (Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, July 2013).

13 Wayfinding is the ability to know where you are, where you are headed and how to get there, how to recognise when you have reached your destination, and how to find your way out. It involves spatial problem solving by providing consistent (and progressive clues). It is a combination of graphic design and architectural design.

14 Plain English is language that is plain, as simple as possible, and easy to understand. Plain language is written with the reader in mind.

15 W3C standards for website operability.
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

Inclusion recognised in practice (continued)

Children and students who experience disability are successfully included in education when:

10 retention is high when children and students:
- transitions are planned, documented and managed with a strengths-based focus
- child or student's records are accurate and these transferred with them on transition
- the early childhood centre or school meets the learning, physical, emotional, social and cultural needs of the child or student
- experience least restrictive practices. 16

11 documentation is kept up to date so that:
- the parent/carer does not need to repeat the child or student's educational experiences each time they meet with new people on site
- children and students leave to transition to the next level with a record of inclusive measures taken and experienced
- appropriate data from these records is used for evidence based research on the impact of these practices on changes to learning outcomes for children and students experiencing disability
- evidence is readily available for input to the annual Nationally Consistent Collection of Data – School Students with Disability

12 appropriate resources, aids, assistive technologies and information are available:
- readily and in good working condition
- and are current and best practice
- and financially supported for access.

16 Restrictive practice is any practice, device or action that removes another person's freedom or interferes with another person's ability to make a decision. This includes detention, seclusion, exclusion, and aversive, chemical, physical and mechanical restraint (Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, July 2013)
Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

APPENDIX 1

Literature search


Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, (2013) Inclusive Education for Students with Disability

Children with Disability Australia, (2013), Inclusion in Education – Towards Equality for Students with Disability


Educating and Supporting Students with Disability – Discussion Paper (April 2016), Association of Independent Schools of South Australia


South Australian Disability Services Act 1993


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APPENDIX 2

Resources/additional reading


Department for Education and Children's Services, (2011), Protective Practices for Staff in their Interactions with Children and Young People: Guidelines for Staff Working or Volunteering in Education and Care Settings

Department of Education and Training has a range of resources at:
https://www.education.gov.au/students-disability
Fact Sheet 1: Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Fact Sheet 2: Disability Standards for Education 2005
Fact Sheet 3: Parental Engagement
Fact Sheet 4: Effective Consultation
Fact Sheet 5: Complaints Processes


Principles of Inclusion for Children and Students with Disability in Education and Care

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

- Effective building practices for children and students with disability - August 2016 (PDF 726KB)
- Equipment for children and students with disability - February 2014 (PDF 605KB)
- Equipment provision for children and students with disabilities brochure 2014 (PDF 215KB)
- Transition guidelines for early childhood brochure - updated February 2014 (PDF 145KB)
- Transition guidelines for early childhood booklet - updated February 2014 (PDF 270KB)
- KidsMatter and young children with disability with disability evaluation report 2013 (PDF 1520KB)
- Disability services and children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting - December 2012 (PDF 430KB)
- Equipment for children and students with a disability, November 2012 (PDF 6MB)
- A guide to protecting children and young people with disability and preventing sexual abuse - for parents and carers (PDF 847KB)
- Protecting children and young people with disability - a booklet for parents and carers (PDF 5.5MB)
- Education options for children and students with autism spectrum disorder - October 2010, (PDF 168KB)
- Physical education report - August 2010 (PDF 772KB)
- KidsMatter for students with a disability evaluation report - February 2010 (PDF 628KB)


Information for Parents and Carers (March 2017) Carers Fact Sheet Version No.5, National Consistent Collection of Data – School Students with Disability


