

# Inclusive Education Statement for students with disability



## Purpose

The NSW Department of Education is committed to building a more inclusive education system. An education system where every student is known, valued and cared for and all students are learning to their fullest capability. This Statement marks the next stage of our work to further embed inclusive practice in NSW public schools, including NSW Government preschools. It is part of the commitment to the pursuit of excellence and the provision of high quality educational opportunities for every child, across all of NSW public schools.

## What we mean by inclusive education

In NSW, the [Disability Strategy 2019](#) outlines the vision for building a better education system for students with disability in NSW public schools. We worked closely with teachers, disability and education experts, families, carers, and other stakeholders to develop priority focus areas and a definition of inclusive education.

Under the Strategy, **inclusive education in NSW** is defined as *all students, regardless of disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, language, gender, sexual orientation or faith, can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similar aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and everyday practices.*

Inclusion means education environments that adapt the design and physical structures, teaching methods, and curriculum as well as the culture, policy and practice of education environments so that they are accessible to all students without discrimination.<sup>1</sup>

This Inclusive Education Statement is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, in particular Article 24 on Education. The Australian and NSW Governments have a comprehensive legal and policy framework in place that supports the principles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.

By ratifying in 2008 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Australia joined other countries in a global effort to promote the equal and active participation of all people with disability. The National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 focuses our efforts towards achieving a society that is inclusive and enabling, providing equality and the opportunity for each person to fulfil their potential.<sup>2</sup>

In NSW, we strive to embed inclusive education across all of our public schools.

We remain committed to providing students with an education that best meets their individual needs and supports them with learning to their fullest capability. We also acknowledge the importance of parental choice regarding the type of education provided to their child.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, Inclusive Education: Understanding Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. [Page 3](#).

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020. [Page 3](#).

# Principles of Inclusive Practice for Students with Disability

## Our ongoing commitment to inclusive education

This Statement focuses on the **principles of inclusive practice** for students with disability, whilst recognising that improving inclusive practice benefits all students. There are many other aspects of inclusion that the Department addresses, including through our Aboriginal education policy, multicultural education policy and anti-racism policy.

We are focussed on achieving and maintaining consistent inclusive practice and high standards across our education system.

Inclusive education in NSW public schools is an ongoing process of reflection, evaluation and reform at all levels across the Department: in classrooms, schools, and networks, and in policy, practice, projects and culture.

We are committed to growing inclusive practice, sharing knowledge across the system, and building the capacity of our NSW public schools to meet the needs of their local students in an inclusive school culture.

We have high expectations of all students. We will continue to work with parents/carers and disability and education experts to personalise support so that every student is engaged and learning to their fullest capability.

For most students, this means attending their local school with individualised support, noting that more than 80% of students with disability currently learn in mainstream classrooms in mainstream public schools. For some students, it may also mean attending more than one learning environment during their education. For example, attending a school for specific purposes, or a support class in a primary or secondary school. All education programs in place for a student with disability need to be regularly reviewed with the student and their parents/carers to determine its ongoing appropriateness.

We will focus on continuing to build inclusive practice across all our schools: identifying where effective practice and high standards are already occurring and where there is further support and development needed along the inclusion journey. For all students the paramount focus is the best education and wellbeing outcomes for the student.

# Principles of inclusive practice

Our continuing journey towards embedding inclusive practice across the education system will be guided by the following principles.

## 1. Student agency and self-determination

- Students have a voice, and are supported to express their views. The capacity of students to solve problems, set goals, make decisions and self-advocate is valued and developed.
- Students are involved in decisions that affect them.
- Students will be supported to achieve the best learning and wellbeing outcomes possible with the most appropriate learning program that suits their needs.
- Parents/carers are engaged as partners in supporting student voice and participation.
- We use feedback from students to drive continuous improvement in schools and across the system.
- Teachers and school leaders develop individualised learning goals that set high aspirations for students, with ongoing review.
- Students and their parents/carers are supported to prepare for and navigate key transitions from starting school, transitioning from year six to seven, and transitioning to post-school life.

## 2. Parent and carer inclusion

- Teachers and schools work in partnership with the student's parents/carers and support people to achieve the best outcomes for their child's education.
- Teachers and schools will use collaborative approaches to plan and achieve agreed and measurable outcomes for every student.
- Teachers and schools will continue to seek the views of parents/carers to determine the most appropriate education program for students to ensure it continues to achieve the best learning and wellbeing outcomes possible.
- Teachers and schools will work in partnership with families and carers to prepare students for key transitions.
- Families have access to information about the support that is available for their child.
- Students, and their families and carers receive effective communications and resources.



### 3. Social and cultural inclusion

- All students are welcomed and supported to build relationships with their peers.
- The school community embraces all learners, has respect for, and values diversity.
- Leaders in schools and those supporting schools model inclusion in all aspects of their work.
- Students are supported to develop their social and emotional skills to create a positive school environment.
- Learning environments are welcoming and accessible for students, families and the wider school community.



### 4. Curriculum inclusion

- Students with disability are supported to access the same curriculum and syllabus outcomes as their peers, in developmentally appropriate ways. Critical to this is student-centred education planning, reasonable adjustments and differentiated teaching, learning and assessment activities.
- Teachers use evidence-based practices that address the diverse needs of students in their classes.
- Teachers and school leaders work in partnership with a range of services to provide personalised support. This includes allied health workers, other government agencies, specialists and the community to meet the needs of students at school.
- School staff use resources flexibly and adjust the use of resources to reflect changing student needs.
- Teachers and school leaders monitor the progress of individual students against their learning goals, focus on strengths and address areas for improvement where needed.



### 5. Workforce capability for inclusion

- Students with disability have equitable access to quality teaching that meets individual needs, delivers excellent educational outcomes and empowers students and their families with agency and choice to improve their school experience.

- Teachers, school staff, and school leaders are supported to strengthen inclusive practice and personalised planning to meet individual student needs. Support includes evidence-based resources, professional learning, mentoring and supervision.
- Teachers are supported to provide adjustments and differentiate their teaching for the diversity of students in their class.
- Teachers are supported to assess and monitor the progress of students with disability. We will develop the evidence of the effectiveness of available tools.



### 6. System inclusion

- Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and everyday practices in NSW public schools. Inclusive practice is evident in classrooms, schools, school leadership, and across all staff who support schools.
- Leaders in schools and those supporting schools model inclusive practices in all aspects of their work.
- Leaders are champions of change and actively promote inclusive practice.
- We will continue to build the capability of all NSW public schools to meet the needs of their local students.
- We support building the evidence base of what works to improve outcomes for students with disability.
- We will adopt a whole school, whole system approach to measure progress to drive ongoing improvements in learning outcomes for students with disability.
- We support students and their parents/carers to prepare for and navigate key transitions from early childhood to starting school, transitioning from year six to seven, and transitioning to post-school life.
- We use feedback from students, parents/carers and school staff to drive continuous improvement in schools and across the system. We will incorporate best practice infrastructure design in how we build and modify our schools to ensure that learning environments promote inclusion.

By building a more inclusive education system we will actively contribute to the NSW Department of Education's strategic vision to be the best education system in Australia and one of the finest in the world.