



Children and Young People
with Disability Australia

Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Submission

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Authorised by:

Mary Sayers, Chief Executive Officer

Contact details:

Children and Young People with Disability Australia

E. marysayers@cyda.org.au

P. 03 9417 1025

W. www.cyda.org.au

Acknowledgements:

Children and Young People with Disability Australia would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which this report has been written, reviewed and produced, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future. This is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Executive summary

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2021 Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (the Review).

This submission focuses on the experience of children and young people with disability in the education settings in which graduate teachers start their career. We draw the Department's attention to our reports highlighting the experiences of children and young people with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic, and our 2019 submission to the Disability Royal Commission. We have incorporated relevant themes and findings into this submission and have attached copies of these papers.

Additionally, CYDA notes the work done in this area by the [Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education](#) (ACIE), of which we are the co-chair. ACIE is an initiative bringing together organisations that share a commitment to advancing inclusive education across state and territory education systems, including government and non-government schools. It comprises hundreds of people with disability and their families, teachers, lawyers and academics, representing a huge source of expertise and lived experience in this specific area.

CYDA's national education surveys show students with disability are routinely excluded in their education, with many segregated from 'mainstream' schools and classrooms, not attending school full-time, and/or being refused enrolment and excluded from school activities. Suspensions and expulsions are also common practices.

While most students in our surveys receive some support at school because of their disability, many families report paying out-of-pocket for relevant supports and equipment. Students with disability also face unacceptably high levels of abuse and violence at school, including bullying and restrictive practices such as restraint and/or seclusion.

Overall, families/caregivers of students with disability do not consider:

- students receive adequate support in their education
- they were communicated with regularly about the student's learning progress
- teachers have high expectations of the student
- teachers have the required training to provide a supportive and enriching education environment.

This points to the importance of initial teacher education including attracting and selecting high-quality candidates and preparing ITE students to be effective teachers. Quality initial teacher education and effective teachers impact the experience of students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability. Other factors, including a lack of accountability to applying the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, pervasive culture of low expectations and funding patterns, also contribute to the present educational crisis for students with disability. Young people, families/caregivers, advocacy organisations, and other stakeholders tell us of the importance of the role of teachers in ensuring the educational rights of students with disability and resulting educational outcomes and experiences.

Driving change for inclusive education

Realising inclusive education in Australia for students with disability is essential for creating the inclusive society we all want, and lifelong benefits for children and young people. A roadmap is a journey from a starting point to an end destination. The end destination we want is inclusive education in Australia, a fundamental human right recognised in the CPRD and defined in General Comment No.4, for all children and young people with disability, without exception.

To this effect, ACIE launched *Driving change: A roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia* in 2020.

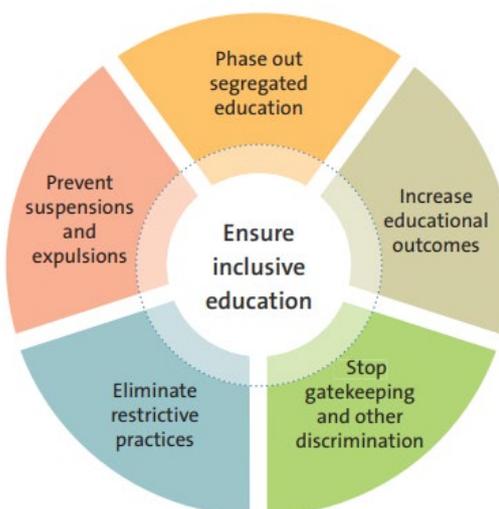
Our pledge for inclusive education

"We pledge our support for the goal and principles of inclusive education as a fundamental human right of every person and will work towards an inclusive education system and the elimination of barriers and discrimination against children and young people with disability in education and in society as a whole."

Our Roadmap is underpinned by six key pillars to help realise inclusive education in Australia and prevent the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of students with disability. These pillars are drawn from the evidence base and embed the rights of students as set out in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)."

The Roadmap has two key sections:

1. the outcomes that need to occur, stepped out over the next 10 years; and
2. the key levers for change needed to realise these outcomes.



Australia has many educational stakeholders across state and territory government and non-government sectors, including students themselves, parents, teachers, principals, professional associations/unions, academics and more. Our starting point is that all education stakeholders want the best for students with disability.

One of the key levers for change is teacher education, including recommendations:

- Research and develop the evidence base of best practice models and ensure this is widely disseminated (e.g., using co-teaching and peer tutoring, rather than teachers' aides).

- Train teachers in team-based approaches and collaborative models to support students with disability, including family-centred practice.
- Develop a national standard for inclusive education in pre-service teacher training.
- Fund postgraduate qualifications in inclusive education and strategically use and reward expertise across education systems to support schools in inclusion.
- Increase the numbers of teachers with disability.
- Invest in professional development for principals and teachers in inclusive education and preventing discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect of students with disability.

“We found no evidence that beginning teachers were unprepared for the classroom or that they are bad at behaviour management. In fact, we found that most beginning teachers engaged in higher levels of emotional support than their more experienced colleagues.

*Rather than implementing any more graduation hurdles designed to “vet” entry to the profession or further destabilising university teacher education, governments need to look at the evidence and turn instead to finding better ways of directing support to **all** teachers and provide intelligently targeted, quality professional learning to those who need it.”¹*

The evidence on teacher training for inclusive education

Inadequate, or severely inadequate, teacher education for inclusion is a major barrier to inclusive education. In 2019, CYDA commissioned an extensive systematic literature review of inclusive education². This review examined evidence across six decades and incorporates more than 400 research papers, relevant treaties and reports, to further explore the existing barriers and the possibilities for addressing these to bring about the realisation of inclusive education.

This review found teacher attitudes influence the implementation of inclusive practices in the classroom and that teacher education is directly related to teacher attitudes. Teachers who receive education about inclusive education have been found to be more likely to have positive attitudes towards students who experience disability.

The review also found that it is not only the pre-service education that teachers receive, but also ongoing professional development that needs to focus on inclusive education³.

¹ Beginner teachers are NOT under prepared and NOT bad at managing behaviour. Here’s the evidence September 10, 2020 <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=7428>

² Cologon, K. (2019) Towards inclusive education: A necessary process of transformation. Report written by Dr Kathy Cologon, Macquarie University for Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

³ Ibid.

From the evidence review it is clear that key elements of teacher education that result in more positive attitudes towards, and understanding of, inclusive education include⁴:

- teacher education based on an anti-bias, rights-based approach to inclusive education for all students
- education for critical reflection and critical consciousness to facilitate inclusive attitudes
- support for teachers to develop skills in identifying, challenging and addressing barriers to inclusion
- teacher education that enables teachers to develop an understanding of ableism, recognise ableist values and practices, and seek to disestablish ableist attitudes, including consideration of representation of people who experience disability
- support to move beyond deficit thinking entrenched within the 'special' education paradigm towards a strengths-based approach to education that welcomes and celebrates diversity
- learning about and developing a rights-based understanding of inclusive education
- engaging in critical reflection about beliefs and practices
- building confidence for inclusive education through reflective practice on developing knowledge of flexible pedagogy³⁸⁷
- engaging with critical disability studies to develop understanding of the social construction of disability and the role of the teacher in reducing ableism
- developing an understanding of diversity as a resource rather than a 'problem' and learning to presume competence and hold positive expectations of all students
- learning about available supports for facilitating inclusive education
- critical engagement with resources and inclusive approaches to provisioning the environment
- developing an understanding of the importance of building relationships with students to facilitate inclusion
- developing an understanding of the importance of listening to people who experience disability, including children and young people, and drawing on the disability rights movement in striving towards inclusive education (and within this, providing opportunities for respectful engagement with people who experience disability and their families) •
- establishing strategies for ongoing collaboration with other teachers, including the provision of a 'theoretical toolbox' to assist with engaging in ongoing critical thinking and critical reflection³⁹⁵ •
- learning about effective approaches to using support for inclusive education, particularly awareness of common pitfalls and important practices for collaborating with paraprofessionals, and alternative approaches to support
- support for developing understanding of and skills for engaging in differentiation and universal approaches to curriculum, pedagogy, the environment and assessment.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 48-49

CYDA responses to the Review questions

Question	Recommendations
<p>4 How could more high-quality candidates from diverse backgrounds be encouraged to consider a career in teaching?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for states and territories, and other educational structures to formalise a commitment to recruitment of people with disability • All elements of ITE should be accessible and inclusive • Need for states and territories, and other educational structures to commit to greater accessibility within schools
<p>11 Have you experienced teacher shortages? Has it been in a particular subject area or region?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often inclusion specialists and supporting teachers (not aides) are rationed across schools and limited in their ability to appropriately meet the needs of teachers and therefore students
<p>12 Should something be done to match the supply of teachers from ITE providers with the demands of jurisdictions and sectors? What would this look like?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to avoid any conflicts of interest that would be created between demand and supply that might risk quality • Any commitments need to forward plan for inclusive education models not the current dual track segregated model seen across all jurisdictions in Australia
<p>15 Are the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards) fit for purpose in identifying the key skills and knowledge pre-service teachers need to be ready for the classroom? Do the Teacher Standards adequately reflect the role of teachers in supporting pre-service and graduate teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Teacher Standards should support and align to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 • Please refer to CYDA's submission to the 2020 Disability Standards for Education 2005 Review
<p>16 Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As noted in our executive summary, there are a variety of concerns and issues • Please refer to CYDA's annual education survey - 2020 report Not even remotely fair: Experiences of students with disability during COVID-19, we explore the experiences of students with disability in relation to the educational changes made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic • National Youth Disability Summit - What young people with disability said - Education Position Paper
<p>19 Do the current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment? How could these be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to limit or remove practical experience arrangements in segregated settings • Need to focus on inclusive education not special education as the key future subject for ITE
<p>21 Do the current course accreditation arrangements support ITE students being taught evidence-based high-impact teaching strategies? How could this be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to reference evidence-based research on inclusive education