

Chapter 3

Practising inclusion in diverse school communities

Learning objectives

This chapter aims to:

- describe best teaching practices for the successful inclusion of students with additional learning needs, focusing on the development of positive attitudes to diversity and strategies for creating inclusive environments
- provide and explain an evidence base for best practices in inclusion in a range of educational settings
- describe and explain the notions of ‘embracing, negotiating, programming, resourcing and building capacity for’ inclusion
- give pre-service and early career teachers an insight into the experience of engaging in a diverse school community that practises successful inclusion
- provide a philosophical scaffold and context for the following chapters on inclusive teaching and learning practices, strategies to support inclusive teaching, and inclusion across the school years.

Key points

- 1 Teachers can make a substantial difference in the lives of their students.
- 2 The inclusion of students with additional needs may increase the challenges faced by teachers.
- 3 Change and innovation at individual, school and systemic levels may be required. Some teachers may find this to be personally and professionally challenging.
- 4 Collaboration among all stakeholders – including students, teachers and other school personnel, parents and families, and communities – is an essential means of both supporting those involved and of bringing about change.
- 5 Most educational authorities provide support to encourage and facilitate inclusion, which is usually negotiated during an enrolment process that precedes placement.
- 6 Thorough planning and skilled implementation of appropriate individual plans usually overcomes these challenges.
- 7 There is a broad range of resources to support inclusion.
- 8 The initial assessment of support needs in the enrolment of students with additional needs is crucial.
- 9 Teachers need to be familiar with the education systems within which they work.
- 10 One best practice in planning for inclusion is planning for individual needs within an ecological context.

Suggested responses to narrative discussion questions and end-of-chapter activities

Narrative 3.1

- 1 Imagine you have just commenced your first full-time appointment. What information would you seek about your students and the school and who could provide this?
 - It is important for newly-appointed teachers to plan ahead and consider the possibilities that may occur early in their career. Some preparation now will assist them to make a more seamless transition into the classroom.
 - Refer to the narrative and note the information Justine needed. Think about some other questions she could have asked.
 - Make a list of personnel who may be approached for information. This will change from State to State and vary across systems. Refer to their websites.

Narrative 3.2

- 1 Justine was ready to prepare visuals and a quiet calming space even before she had met Max or his parents. She also used a 'counting down' strategy to gain the students' attention. From where and how might she have got this knowledge?
 - Prior knowledge of the student may be limited. However, there are some general characteristics that may assist the teacher to be prepared. In this circumstance, student records were also available and contained information that assisted the interpretation of needs.
 - Justine also used regular parent communication, bringing undesired behaviour to the student's attention and praise of desirable behaviour as strategies for behaviour management. She has a Behaviour Management Plan including school rules and expectations for the whole class as well as a 'busy box', visuals and a calming space for individual students.
 - Teachers could consider what they have seen being used in classrooms and discuss what they feel they are most and least comfortable with using in their own classroom.

Narrative 3.3

- 1 Justine developed a range of resources for the students in her class. Make a list of all her resources and add any that you would use if you were in her situation.
 - List resources from the narrative.
 - Refer to other chapters for additional resources that may have been useful, including technology.
 - Search websites for suggestions and ideas for materials, readings etc. and create a bookmarked or favourites folder for quick reference.
- 2 Justine communicated the plans for her students with all of her colleagues. Why did she do this?
 - While this point may appear to be self-evident, it underlines the importance of communication about students with disabilities. For inclusion to be a whole school responsibility, all stakeholders need to be informed.

Narrative 3.4

- 1 Justine's principal communicated with Mia's previous school. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this course of action? Are there any privacy or legal issues to be considered?
 - Refer to federal and State privacy legislation for details.
 - Information is usually also available on the websites for State education and other authorities as all have privacy policies.
 - Frequently parents do not want information shared with schools or across systems.
 - Other legislation may also need to be considered (e.g. WHS where there are safety and security issues).
- 2 List some of the benefits and challenges of the 'team teaching' strategy that Justine used. How would you feel about team teaching?
 - Clarify a common understanding of 'team teaching' and 'peer tutoring'.
 - List advantages and disadvantages of these approaches and discuss how students may benefit.

Narrative 3.5

- 1 Imagine you were asked to present at a staff meeting on your 'wonderfully inclusive class'. Reflecting on the material from this chapter, outline the content of a one-hour presentation on this topic.
 - Consider all factors that are needed for successful inclusion. Use examples from the narratives as well as research that was utilised in all other discussion points. This could be a valuable assignment to assess the depth of understanding of the inclusion process.

Summary

- 1 Imagine you were enrolling a child with additional learning needs to your local public school. Briefly summarise the steps you would take to ensure successful inclusion.
 - Consider the five sections of successful inclusion in Figure 3.2. Does this differ from a teacher's/parent's perspective? How involved should the parent be in all the five steps?
- 2 Is the number of students with additional needs enrolling in any one school problematic? Give reasons for your answer.
 - The answer to this question depends on the definition of additional needs. While every classroom (or school) may not have a student enrolled who has significant physical, intellectual, emotional or sensory disabilities, every school will have a proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities in a range from mild through to more challenging.
 - The issue of whether an increasing number of students with higher support needs can be included in a school will depend on factors such as the amount of assistance available for activities such as lifting and positioning and the physical restraints (availability of ramps, disabled bathrooms etc.).
 - Schools with a welcoming attitude and staff that are skilled at assisting students with additional needs will be an attractive option for parents looking for an inclusive setting for their child. This can place pressure on a school. A whole systems approach is needed to provide capacity building for all schools within their jurisdiction.
 - Demographic glitches can occur. Occasionally a school will find they have a larger number of students with additional needs than the community norm. It would be interesting to discuss why this might occur:
 - Examples: Transport may be available such as a rail line or bus link, which makes the school easy to access; the school may have physical features that are appealing such as

disabled facilities, small number of students, secure fencing; or locality of group homes may be within the drawing area of a particular school.

Discussion questions

- 1 Based on Justine's journey, the content from this chapter and your own experiences, what are some of the best practices for successful inclusion, with reference to the following:
 - a. The development of positive attitudes to diversity
 - b. Strategies for creating inclusive learning environments.

Teachers should consider the content from the five sections of practising successful inclusion (Figure 3.20) discussed throughout this chapter and compare it to their own experiences within schools. Question a. above focuses on sections one and five. Question b. focuses on aspects of sections two to four.

- 2 Describe and explain each of the five evidence-based elements of best practice for inclusion: embracing, negotiating, programming, resourcing and building capacity.

At this stage in the chapter, teachers should be able to summarise and give examples of each of the five elements. Some possible considerations could be:

- Schools with a welcoming attitude and staff that are skilled at assisting students with additional needs will be an attractive option for parents looking for an inclusive setting for their child. This can place pressure on a school. A whole systems approach is needed to provide capacity building for all schools within their jurisdiction.
- Various education authorities will have enrolment policies and procedures in place. These should be the first consideration for a learning support team that is establishing its own guidelines. Other legislation such as *Disability Discrimination Acts* and occupational health and safety requirements may also need to be considered.
- The needs of each student should be considered within the context of the school. A learning support team meeting will establish what adjustments and access requirements may be needed. Communication with previous educational settings will help to make these determinations.
- Factors that are specific to the school (e.g. availability of ramps, disabled toilets or trained personnel) should also be considered. Access to external supports such as specialist teachers for vision or hearing and consultancy should be determined.
- The extent to which it is the responsibility of individual teachers to source or develop resources may be dependent on the school setting and the other personnel available. In a small, remote school it could be that the teacher is solely responsible for the provision of teaching and learning for a student or students with additional needs. In a larger, city-based school, the teacher may have access to support teachers, consultants and resource centres. Teachers need to be prepared for a range of scenarios and use their skills and the available resources to provide programs that will meet the educational outcomes for all their students. Teachers may also need to enlist their own support, rather than expecting that it will come to them. There are many strategies that could be utilised.

Examples: Recruiting community volunteers to help with making instructional materials, such as games and charts. Parents who work may be very willing to do some cutting and pasting at home; using the Internet to access curriculum sites and communicate with consultants and supervisors; and contacting colleagues in other schools to gather ideas and share resources.

- 3 Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Fortune PS (the school in Justine's story) and your own experiences, with regard to the inclusion of students with diverse needs.
 - Teachers could create a Venn diagram to demonstrate the similarities and differences between their experiences and Fortune PS.
- 4 Assess your current values and attitudes toward including students with additional needs in mainstream schools. Do you agree that all students, regardless of ability or need should be allowed to enrol in their local school? Or should they be forced to enrol in schools for their specific needs? Or is there some middle ground? If so, which students should be enrolled in to which setting?
 - Note here the differences and relationships between feelings, thoughts and beliefs – particularly as they influence values, attitudes and behaviours around the notions of diversity, equity, disability and inclusion.
 - Important here is a recognition of differences: in attitudes/beliefs expressed by students, classroom teachers, specialist and support teachers and staff, executive staff and community members; and school policies and plans vs observed practices. Does policy support/facilitate/match practice? Are attitudes/beliefs supportive/facilitative of practices?
 - Note that some considerable sensitivity is required here as a 'snapshot' view of these complexities may not be truly indicative of what is happening.

Individual activities

- 1 Consider this scenario: You have been newly appointed as a classroom teacher. One (or more!) of your students has specific additional needs. (Construct a hypothetical profile.) If you were going to present a case for additional support and resources to your learning support team, what types of evidence would you provide to inform the decision making?
 - Consider the individual student and their level of functioning and the amount of support required to meet curriculum outcomes or to access the environment. Explain how these cannot be met within the current class/school resources. Examples of evidence may include workbooks, photographic or digital images, checklists, assessment results, counsellor's reports etc.
 - Refer to Justine's narratives and list the examples she used to support her students. Discuss the effectiveness of her strategies. What difficulties might she have encountered in a less supportive situation and how could these have been resolved?
 - Is there additional evidence that Justine could have used or that you would use for the student in your hypothetical profile? For example: Writing samples, reading levels, spelling scores and other academic assessments. Create a list.
- 2 Use the same scenario as per Question 1. Select a generic lesson plan. How could you differentiate and individualise this to improve the learning outcomes of all of your students? (Consider also the principles of Universal Design for Learning.)
 - Consider physical modifications for fine or gross motor movement and access for students with sensory impairments. Plan how outcomes could be adjusted for students with intellectual disabilities or learning disorders. For example, rather than reading a novel and writing a report, could they view a screening or documentary and give a verbal response? Ensure that any activities are not going to be overstimulating for students with autistic tendencies (e.g. loud noises).

- 3 Use the same scenario as per Question 1. Design a resource package using school, community and systemic resources.
 - Refer to the narratives and use the examples provided to commence a list of possible resources. Consider material, financial and human resources. See Figure 3.13 Resourcing Inclusion
- 4 Go to the website of a local education authority. Find and read the web pages that provide information on how they support the inclusion of students with additional needs.
 - See education authorities' websites. These are generally comprehensive and highly informative, detailing organisational goals, personnel and role statements, policies, procedures and contact information. Students should be encouraged to investigate and build a comfortable familiarity with the websites for their local educational authority.
 - Education authorities generally list statements of principles, policies and procedures on their websites. These can be downloaded as hard copy. Keywords that might assist searches include: special education, disabilities, inclusion, integration, support services/classes/teachers policies, funding, consultants, learning difficulties, assessment etc.
 - It is valuable for students to develop a familiarity with key education authorities in their intended area of employment. In addition to government authorities, most States have both a Catholic schools authority and an independent schools authority. Investigations into the principles, policies, procedures, facilities and services of these authorities, as well as independent schools, are encouraged.
 - Care must be taken to distinguish between services and resources to support the inclusion of students with additional needs in regular classes and schools, and those to support placements in more restrictive settings.
 - Students could be allocated different websites/pages to allow for comparisons between resources provided by authorities.
- 5 Imagine yourself back at your high school. Also imagine you had a serious illness or physical injury and are confined to a wheelchair for your remaining time at school. Develop a hypothetical individual education plan, (see Chapter 4 for an example layout), with an emphasis on a 'package' of resources to support you. Consider how you would navigate yourself around the school and access all the learning opportunities you were able to in your real-life high school years.
 - This individual activity encourages students to reflect on a more personal case study.
 - This is probably an easy scenario to consider. Having the students consider alternative scenarios where inadequate resource support was forthcoming could be challenging.
 - Additional resources are available from education authorities, although these too are subject to reasonable limits.
 - High support needs may be easily met with the appropriate resources.
 - The pre-inclusion and inclusion/transition phases of the inclusion process for a student with high support needs are critical.
 - The ability to advocate for students with additional needs is a valuable and necessary one. Teachers need to have a sound understanding of rights, entitlements and due process to fulfil this role competently.
 - Disability and anti-discrimination legislation is pertinent here.
 - Consider also what criteria might be used to judge the success of the inclusion/intervention.
- 6 The following journal articles and books (see further recommended reading) focus on various aspects of inclusion and how these relate to pre-service teachers and teacher education.

Obtain one or more articles of interest and consider their relevance to your professional development as a pre-service teacher. (We consider all of these as recommended reading for this chapter.)

- Beacham, N., & Rouse, M. (2011). Student teachers attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and inclusive practice. *Journal of Research in Special Education*, 12(3), 3–11.
- Clark-Louque, A., & Latunde, Y. (2014). Supporting preservice teachers' collaboration with school leaders. *Journal of School Public Relations*, 35(4), 494.
- Clerke, S. (2013). *Partnering for school improvement: case studies of school-community partnerships in Australia*. (A. Lonsdale, Ed.) Retrieved March 12, 2016, from ACER: http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article.1020&context.policy_analysis_misc
- Coyne, P., Pisha, B., Dalton, B., Zeph, L. A., & Smith, N. C. (2012). Literacy by design: a universal design for learning approach for students with significant intellectual disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 33(3), 162–172.
- Garner, P. & Forbes, F. (2012). Disposable assets: are special education teachers still needed in 21st Century Australian schools? *NISE Bulletin*, 11, 62–66.
- Hemmings, B., & Woodcock, S. (2011). Preservice teachers' views of inclusive education: a content analysis. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 35(2), 103–116.
- Teo Shu Lin, C., & Walker, S. (2014). Child-related factors that influence teacher-child relationships using an Australian national sample. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(2), 51–59.

Group activities

- 1 You have been newly appointed to a class with a number of students with additional needs. You have no information about these needs at this time. Your principal has allocated you a teacher assistant for 10 hours per week for at least the first term. How could you plan to use this time as a resource to support you and your students in your classroom?

This is a challenging first scenario for new/beginning teachers.

- A critical first step is to engage the support of the school learning support team.
 - Comprehensive initial support-needs assessments are a priority to inform subsequent interventions/resource support allocations.
 - In the first instance, the priority for teachers is to have the teacher's aide focus on informing these assessments.
 - Initial assessments can be well informed by previous class teachers, school-based support teacher/s, the school counsellor/psychologist and parents.
 - Arranging hands-on assistance in the classroom should be an early priority.
- 2 Form a learning support team, with the core members of principal, counsellor, support teacher, the parent and the classroom teacher of a (hypothetical) student with additional learning needs. Role-play a LST meeting where the school is negotiating a resource package to support this student.
 - Prepare and discuss a case study – about 300 words of detail.
 - Decide on the members of the LST and assign roles.
 - Using pertinent resource checklists, prepare an individual support plan for the first two phases of the inclusion process. (See also Individual Activity 1 above.)
 - One option is to use the same case study for all groups (this could be taken from the textbook) to allow an extended discussion comparing the Individual Support Plans prepared by each group.
 - Another option is to vary the attitudes/beliefs of participants in consecutive role-plays.

This gives the participants and audience a chance to observe the important dynamic that occurs in these meetings.

- 3 Prepare and engage in a debate on this topic: Inclusion for students with mental health issues and challenging behaviours is unrealistic.
 - Students may benefit from an explanation of the nature of mental health issues and diagnoses and a description of any accompanying challenging behaviours.
 - Some teachers would argue that the time required to manage students with challenging behaviours detracts from quality teaching and learning time for the whole group.
 - The necessity to use a variety of management strategies in the classroom does not negate the responsibility of the teacher to include students with a range of additional needs.
 - Appraisal of needs and subsequent allocation of resources is required for students with a range of additional needs.

- 4 Prepare and engage in a debate on this topic: The Australian Curriculum is inappropriate for students with more severe intellectual disabilities.
 - Students may benefit from an explanation of the abilities of and challenges faced by students with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabilities.
 - Some classroom teachers, especially those with little or no special education training or experience, regard significant parts of the 'common curriculum' (and syllabuses) to be largely irrelevant to the educational needs of students with intellectual disabilities.
 - Some teachers would argue that the amount of preparation and modification to the common curriculum is unreasonable, especially for students with severe intellectual disabilities.
 - Outcomes can remain common for all students – regardless of (intellectual) disability – but indicators can and should be modified/adapted to facilitate achievement (mastery/competency) and fair assessment. It is reasonable achievement for a student to be 'working towards an outcome' and not necessarily to 'achieve' that outcome.
 - The necessity to use more varied teaching/learning strategies does not necessarily require a movement away from the common curriculum.

Chapter video

Each Chapter has a video that has been specifically created to support *Inclusion in Action*.

Video title: *Practising successful inclusion in secondary school: Matt's story.*

Description: The video clips developed to support Chapter 3 (and Chapter 12) show interviews with: Matt, a Year 11 student with a vision impairment; Jo, a consultant with the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children; and Brendon, the school's assistant principal. Each interviewee explains their views on the 'ingredients' of successful transition to, and inclusion in, a secondary school setting.

Questions and activities on CourseMate website:

- 1 What strategies were used to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school for Matt?
- 2 How are classroom resources adapted to ensure that Matt can access the regular curriculum?
- 3 What does Brendon explain to be the key elements of a successfully inclusive high-school community?

Additional questions for Instructors' use:

- 4 One key element in successful inclusion is a supportive 'attitude'. How might a supportive attitude be developed among the various member groups of a high school community?
- 5 Another key element in successful inclusion in a school is supportive leadership. How might supportive leadership be evidenced in a secondary school setting?