

## **CEWA – REVIEW OF DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION PREPARED FOR NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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### **PURPOSE**

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is reviewing the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) in 2020. The Standards seek to clarify the education provisions of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* so that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

The Minister for Education, in consultation with the Attorney-General, must review the Standards every five years to determine if they are effective in achieving their objectives. The 2020 review follows the 2010 and 2015 reviews. The Department is seeking information about any actions that Catholic Schools have taken that relate to the 2015 Review recommendations.

This paper outlines a number of initiatives that Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) have developed to ensure the implementation of the Standards in school settings following the 2015 review.

This paper also provides a summary of improvements that could be considered to improve the Standards and how they are used and implemented.

### **CEWA INITIATIVES**

The introduction of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) has meant schools must think of students with disability not just as students with diagnosed development or acquired disabilities, but more broadly to include students with learning difficulties and disorders. CEWA schools are reminded to participate in an annual review of the Standards as part of their ongoing NCCD processes.

A School Wide Action Plan Template was created to assist schools to develop an approach to increase staff knowledge and understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), the Standards and the NCCD and the implications on their practice.

CEWA promotes the e-learning modules provided on the NCCD website, designed to help schools uphold their legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Standards. Schools are encouraged to include the courses as part of the induction process for all new staff commencing any role within CEWA schools. Information and direction to the e-learning modules has also been added to the Students with Disability (SWD) Team SharePoint.

The SWD Team continue to offer face to face context specific professional learning of the Standards to all schools. The professional learning provided by CEWA helps build professional judgement of school teams in making educational adjustments for students with disability rather than relying on a medical or clinical diagnosis alone and assists schools to formally and consistently recognise the support and adjustments provided to students with disability. A register of school's participation has been maintained.

Communication is provided to Principals at the beginning of every school year advising them of the Disability Standards for Education Professional Learning opportunities for staff online or face to face.

In 2015, following the introduction of NCCD, CEWA aligned the language in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) template to be more consistent with the language used in the NCCD process.

In 2018, a further review of the CEWA IEP template was completed by the SWD team following feedback received from schools regarding the information specific to the IEP template and teachers general understanding of the IEP processes. The CEWA SWD team identified an increasing focus on teaching 'life skills' with limited connection to the Western Australian (WA) Curriculum. Subsequently an IEP work party was formed to review the IEP with a focus to ensure a greater connection between a student's IEP and the WA Curriculum. The IEP template was further updated to include additional NCCD requirements and clearer connections to the WA Curriculum. A Quick Guide and a webinar were developed to guide teachers on how to write an IEP. The Individual Education Planning and Reporting for Students with Disability document was also updated to reflect the requirements of the DSE, WA Curriculum and NCCD. The Primary and Secondary Disability Coordinator Support Networks were used to gain feedback on the updated documents. The documents were disseminated through these networks and the network online portals.

Abilities Based Learning Education, Western Australia (ABLEWA) supports teachers to assess students on the basis of their abilities and provides explicit guidance material and resources that will support teachers to effectively plan and teach students based on their individual learning needs. While many students with a disability and/or additional learning needs can engage with the Western Australian P-10 curriculum provided reasonable adjustments are made, additional curriculum materials are often required for students with a significant intellectual disability. The ABLEWA Stages A to D curriculum materials provide this group of students with access to content that supports their progress towards the learning described at Pre-primary level. Since 2015 the SWD team have supported teachers to engage with the ABLEWA guidance material and resources to ensure students with disability engage with endorsed curriculum content.

SWD Team SharePoint has been developed and is a depository for templates and other resources/webinars to assist schools to meet their obligations to support students with disability. The resources have been critically reviewed and recommended against the following criteria:

- fit for purpose - the resources are in line with supporting SWD via a remote platform in line with curriculum and Five Teacher Practices articulated within the CEWA Vision for Learning which provides teachers with an understanding of pedagogical practices that enhance learning - not therapy based
- customised for SWD rather than subject specific
- not long-term specific interventions
- safely accessible
- free or reasonably priced
- not overly game based
- does not require new technology nor extensive adult facilitation.

Accessibility features of technology have also been added to the SharePoint.

Primary and Secondary Special Education Network meetings are conducted each term and serve as an avenue for teachers supporting students with disability to share best practice and provide instruction on a wide range of effective strategies and adjustments to optimise learning for students with disability. The networks have provided an opportunity to engage with therapist and other student support services.

The SWD team participate in the CEWA Early Career Teacher Program and annually provide face to face professional learning on the Standards.

The Beginning Principals' Network provides beginning principals with the opportunity to engage in professional learning workshops, actively participate in enlightened discourse and share resources. The SWD Team provide face to face professional learning on the Standards.

CEWA deliver targeted support to assist schools to optimise the learning environment they create for Aboriginal students with an emphasis to;

- improve the connection between communities, families and schools; and
- Improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, especially in the areas of educational access, participation, literacy and numeracy and retention and graduation.

A greater connection with the communities fosters greater collaboration and stronger communication when identifying learning goals and specific learning objectives for Aboriginal students with disability. To this end it is an expectation that CEWA schools include the students and their families in the planning and in setting goals.

All CEWA consultants have undertaken the online Cultural Competency training as part of the ongoing focus to improve cultural understandings and educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. Consultants liaise with the Aboriginal Education Consultants and Aboriginal Teaching Assistants to inform and expand their understanding of culture in each region.

Following the rollout of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Western Australia from July 2017, there has been an increase in requests for approval of NDIS-funded therapies to be delivered in schools. The NDIS and External Providers: Guidelines for Schools has been developed by Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) to assist schools when making decisions on access of externally funded health, disability or wellbeing providers delivering services to students in schools, including those students supported by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Guidelines are intended to assist schools when considering requests from external providers for provision of services on the school premises. In addition, the Clinical Access and Information Sharing Agreements have been developed to assist principals with the process.

A greater consideration has been given to planning to support our students with their transition to life post school. CEWA has produced a position statement detailing why planning at this stage of a students schooling is considered to be so important. CEWA has produced a number of resources to assist teachers in their understanding and in planning for Transition to Adult Life (TAL) with our students. The TAL e-learning document has established a set of operating principles which provide a framework for support to students with disability as they transition from school to post school options. This is based on the recognition that students require high quality educational programs that build on their particular strengths, capabilities and needs and which prepare them for effective adult life beyond school and the pursuit of lifelong learning. Another essential element is that the planning needs to be very student focused with as much student input as possible. The collaboration between students, their families or caregivers and school staff is one of the most important elements for successful planning with positive outcomes and this is highly encouraged by all consultants and supported and emphasised at network meetings.

Transition planning seeks to prepare students for the full life experience. Preparation for further study/training and employment – or a mixture of both – are typically the two most important aspects. However, other life skills should also be a part of transition planning

including communication skills; interpersonal skills; problem solving; time management; organisational and prioritising skills; interview techniques; ways to keep safe and recognise risk; personal health, nutrition and wellbeing; financial literacy; civics and citizenship; environmental stewardship; leisure pursuits etc.

A template for recording the TAL plan has been developed which highlights the recommended elements that should be included. This document has undergone scrutiny by CEWA staff and teachers with the final revised edition produced in 2020.

CEWA has developed and implemented guidelines for best practice in TAL with the creation of an electronic toolkit. The toolkit includes:

- Self-auditing tool
- Students digital e-book to develop skills in the following areas: Enterprise, Independent Living and Social Skills

The digital books have been created for both Apple and Android platforms.

## **HOW THE STANDARDS COULD BE IMPROVED**

Do the Standards need changing? If so, please let us know how you would change them.

- Proformas and/or templates of individual or personalised plans which provide a list of essential elements and content that should be included in a student's educational plan. Most jurisdictions provide this, but a common template would provide greater consistency of practice across all Australian schools.

What should be done to improve awareness of the Standards?

- Mandated completion of the Standards e-learning modules for all staff, including teachers, education assistants and leadership personnel with an expected review of the Standards every 3 years. Certification remains valid for three years and then must be reviewed. Jurisdictions to keep a record of training.
- The creation of Disability Standards for Education website where a collection of resources, training modules and other supporting documentation can be found.
- Greater promotion of Exemplar of Practice which demonstrate the Standards in practice across various education settings: early learning, schools, vocational education and higher education. Most schools are not aware of their existence.

Do you need more or different support to help you to understand and apply the Standards? What kind of support would be useful?

- Development of Frequently Asked Questions. Questions could be garnered from teachers and administrators and should include a range of questions that would provide information for beginning teacher as well as experienced leaders.
- Greater clarification of what unjustifiable hardship actually means for a school.
- Provide specific examples of unjustifiable hardship.

Do you find the Guidance Notes for the Standards useful? If not, why not?

- Develop a wider range of Exemplars of Practice to consolidate and improve schools understanding and application of the Standards. The Exemplars could provide examples of adjustments required to meet the needs of a students and how failing to provide the adjustments would highlight how someone might be in breach of the Standards.

What would you change to make the Standards work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability and their families and carers?

- Produce a webinar which would be accessible on a digital platform e.g. DSE website (if developed), NCCD website, YouTube narrated by an Aboriginal person explaining the Standards.
- Provide the Standards in alternative languages i.e. Kriol or another dialect.
- Seek specific feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including all stakeholders.