

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to a review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

While there has been steady progress to eliminate barriers to students with disabilities within regular classroom settings, there continues to be some resistance on the part of schools and educators with accommodating diversity. One of the key challenges for teachers in contemporary schools is challenging behaviours and behaviors that present with concern, on the part of students.

Challenging behaviors can be a consequence of a range of disabilities especially as students use behaviour in order to convey messages regarding their wellbeing, safety and accommodation.

One of the ways in which schools and teachers can address challenging behaviours is through positive education and more specifically through positive behavior support. Through its multi-tiered systems of support, this model accommodates disability in three ways. Utilizing universal design, the initial tier of support accommodates all students, providing recommendations and expectations for the wider student body. The second tier of support embraces small groups and reflects on embedding social skills into everyday classroom interaction. The top tier addresses individual students and includes an intensive support plan within an inclusive setting.

The standards do indeed provide a strong basis for teachers and carers to understand their obligations when it comes to students with disabilities. The standards do improve understanding and awareness regarding what should be done to assist a student with disabilities. However, many staff do not feel confident when implementing reasonable adjustments, and as a consequence this resistance translates into an inability to provide appropriately for the student with a disability.

In order to increase opportunities, access and participation in education, the standards do need to inculcate the idea of positive education which is more values based rather than rule-based. Utilizing this values-based framework allows the standards to be implemented in a more socially just manner.

The standards should do more to accommodate cultural diversity. At the moment the standards are framed within Western tradition with minimal reference points to cultural norms or cultural diversity. Disability is often viewed in different ways within cultural settings. I am appreciative of the inclusion of Australia's First People and of other cultural and ethnic groups as contributing partners to refine and update the disability standards for education.

The standards provide an excellent framework to improve outcomes and to reduce barriers for students with disabilities. In addition to the standards which embraces a different form of support will be useful.