

***Review of education for students with disability in
Queensland state schools – Executive Summary***

Department of Education and Training

February 2017

About this document

In February 2017, Deloitte Access Economics completed a review of education for students with disability in Queensland state schools for the Queensland Department of Education and Training.

This document presents the Executive Summary of the report – *Review of education for students with disability in Queensland state schools*.

Detailed research and analysis that has informed the findings and recommendations in this Executive Summary is presented in the full report, which is hosted on the website of the Queensland Department of Education and Training. Readers should refer to the full report when considering the findings and recommendations presented here.

Glossary

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| ACARA | Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority |
| ACER | Australian Council for Education Research |
| ADG | Assistant Director-General |
| ASD | Autism Spectrum Disorder |
| C2C | Curriculum into the Classroom |
| CESE | Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation |
| COAG | Council of Australian Governments |
| CYDA | Children and Youth with Disability Australia |
| DDA | Disability Discrimination Act 1992 |
| DECO | Disability Education Coordinators |
| DSE | Disability Standards for Education 2005 |
| EAP | Education Adjustment Program |
| ESS | Every Student Succeeding - State Schools Strategy 2016-2020 |
| ESSA | Every Student Succeeds Act (US) (2015) |
| FASD | Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders |
| HOSES | Head of Special Education Services |
| HRC | Human Rights Commission |
| I4S | Investing for Success |
| ICP | Individual Curriculum Plan |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IPS | Independent Public School |
| IQ | Intelligence Quotient |
| MSSD | More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership |
| NAPLAN | National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy |
| NCCD | Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OT | Occupational Therapy |
| P-12 CARF | Prep to Year 12 Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework |
| PBL | Positive Behaviour for Learning |
| PD | Professional Development |
| PSD | Program for Students with Disabilities (Vic) |

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| QADA | Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (1991) |
| QCE | Queensland Certificate of Education |
| QCIA | Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement |
| PWDA | People with Disability Australia |
| RoGS | Report on Government Services |
| RTI | Response to Intervention |
| SDA | School Disciplinary Absence |
| SEP | Special Education Program |
| SES | Socio-economic status |
| SSDSE | Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment |
| ST | Speech therapy |
| SWPBS | Schoolwide positive behaviour support |
| UDL | Universal Design for Learning |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| UNCRPD | United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WSS-SLR | Whole School Support – Student Learning Resource |

Executive summary

Ensuring that students with disability have inclusive and productive educational experiences has presented challenges for education systems around the world. Schools have struggled to value diversity and difference and turn difference into a tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Effectively responding to the challenges and opportunities of student differences – and ensuring that education systems and practices support *all students* engaging with education in a manner that allows them to realise their potential – requires the most careful crafting of policy, programs and practices.

Against this backdrop, and with a view to building on the progress that Queensland has made in the education of students with disability over recent years, the Minister for Education and Training initiated a wide-ranging independent review into the education of students with disability in the Queensland state school sector in July 2016. The purpose of this review was to examine the extent to which current policy settings effectively support students with disability reaching their educational potential and to make recommendations to advance the achievement of this goal.

Deloitte Access Economics was engaged to conduct the review and this report presents the review findings and related recommendations. Consistent with the broad-ranging nature of the review, its findings address all aspects of the state schooling sector's legislative, policy and practice environments as they relate to students with disability, including:

- The overarching policy goals and framework
- Workforce policy, training and capability development
- Leadership and culture
- Educational practice and the tools and mechanisms that drive and enable this
- Resourcing and the processes and governance that support this.

A broad and multi-faceted evidence base is required to comprehensively and systematically review and assess these areas. The review has drawn on an array of sources to inform its findings, including:

- A consultation process including close to 100 parent, student and school staff focus groups in a representative sample of 32 state schools across Queensland, and consultations with more than 40 representative, peak and advocacy groups
- An analysis of student administrative and outcomes data
- An online survey of parents, principals, staff, students and the broader community, which garnered almost 3,000 responses
- This was supplemented with 23 written submissions
- Academic research pertaining to the policies and practices that support outcome achievement for students with disability
- Findings from previous reviews and inquiries in Australia and internationally.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive evidence that has been assembled, there remain areas where further research, analysis and observation will be required to determine and refine details of various strategies and initiatives going forward. In this sense, this review report is not a substitute for the planning required to build a system of education that enables students with disability to achieve the highest attainable outcomes. It is, however, an important precursor to this and its findings and recommendations are intended to chart a course toward this.

Overarching review framework

Like other areas of social policy, there are aspects of the effective education of students with disability where a definitive view regarding leading practice is yet to emerge. However, in the majority of cases, the prevailing evidence provides a basis for identifying the features of schooling systems that support students with disability engaging with education in a way that enables them to achieve to the maximum of their potential.

These features are in many cases not unique to education of students with disability – they equally characterise high performing education systems generally (reinforcing the point that good policy for students with disability is good policy for all students). Together, these features provide a frame of reference for assessing the current policy, practice and resourcing environment in the Queensland state schooling sector as it relates to students with disability. By extension, they also provide a mechanism for identifying those areas where improvement could be made to bring the system more closely into alignment with leading international standards.

Presented under the three broad headings of policy, practice and resourcing, these features form the review’s analytical framework and are summarised below.

In relation to the **policy environment**:

1. Legislative obligations are enshrined in all aspects of policy and practice and widely and clearly communicated so that they are universally understood and adhered to by all those participating in the education system.
2. Expectations with regard to student outcomes – and the preconditions for their achievement – are clearly established and serve as the basis for system-wide accountability and performance monitoring.
3. The efficacy of policy and practice is continually evaluated and refined based on verifiable contemporary evidence.
4. Parents and carers can exercise reasonable levels of choice regarding their child’s education and have access to information required to effectively inform this choice. Parents and carers have access to affordable, accessible, effective mechanisms for raising concerns or complaints regarding their child’s experience with the education system.
5. Parents and carers are actively engaged in their children’s education such that the school and home environment can jointly reinforce students’ learning.
6. The system’s governance and leadership is geared toward driving positive change and installing a system-wide culture aligned with the established objectives.

In relation to the **practice environment**:

7. Teachers are knowledgeable about and skilled in the contemporary practices proven as effective in teaching in classrooms with diverse needs, including students with disability, via exposure and access to:
 - a. high calibre, contemporary pre-service training;
 - b. evidence-based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs;
 - c. real-time support and guidance, such that challenging classroom situations can be appropriately and effectively managed; and
 - d. constructive professional collaboration.
8. School leaders understand their legislative and policy obligations, are effective at relating these obligations to their teaching staff, and draw on available resources and information in developing practice for students with disability.
9. Schools effectively use student data and information to monitor and support student achievement, and transitions between education settings is aided by systematic, timely, universal information exchange.

10. Schools' physical characteristics support and encourage inclusion and differentiation.

In relation to the **resourcing model**:

11. Resource allocations balance the need to recognise differential educational need with the costs of accurately determining this in a way that reinforces the system's broader objectives.

Key findings and recommendations

Ensuring that education systems are equipped to support *all* students in achieving to the maximum of their potential, at a practical level, continues to present a global challenge for policymakers, sector leaders and indeed all those associated with the delivery of education. As recent reviews and inquiries across Australia have demonstrated, there remains a disparity between today's policy and practice and that required to inclusively support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential.

In this sense, Queensland is not unique in the continued challenges it confronts in re-crafting its state schooling system to align with leading contemporary policies and practice. Encouragingly, however, this review finds examples of leading international practice in Queensland state schools today. The simple imperative, therefore, is to continue working toward this standard being a universal one, such that every student with disability receives the high calibre education experience to which they are entitled.

The gains to these students from doing so are evident from the educational outcomes achieved today, under which many students with disability achieve as highly as their peers. Moreover, the review finds that up to half of the variation in learning outcomes observed among students with disability could be eliminated by ensuring educational practice *consistently* meets the best standards evident in the Queensland state schooling sector today.

Lifting the Queensland state schooling sector to this consistent standard – and, over time, transcending it – requires all features of the system's design working harmoniously towards this end. With this in mind, and in accordance with the scope of this review, the review findings and recommendations fall under three broad banners:

1. The **policy framework**, which articulates the goals the system is working towards and prescribes the system's overall architecture and governance
2. **Effective practice** and the requisite capability among principals, teachers and all those interacting with students with disability
3. The **resourcing model**, and the features it must include to support the achievement of the established policy objectives.

Consistent with the diverse and wide-ranging nature of the review recommendations, the ease and immediacy with which they can be implemented varies. Naturally, the planning that follows this review will establish a detailed approach to implementing the accepted review recommendations. However, in the interests of aiding this process, the review's recommendations are classified either as: (i) implement immediately; (ii) implement over a longer time period; or (iii) for further review. The review has also given rise to a range of questions for future research.

Policy framework

The policy framework refers to the overarching system elements and features which determine the environment within which schools operate – that is, the system architecture that supports and guides the education community to achieve its established vision and goals.

International obligations and increasing accountability at a national and international level mean that schooling systems must be equipped to drive improvement in outcomes for all students. Expectations and responsibilities for the education of students with disability are higher than at any point in our history. More than ever, there exists an expectation that education systems will develop strong policy frameworks that drive towards more inclusive schooling systems and better outcomes for *every student*.

While the articulation of the framework here is orientated toward students with disability, it is ultimately a framework geared toward recognising the educational needs of *every student*. Its design considers: (i) expectations relating to education delivery; (ii) sector and school-level accountability; (iii) system governance and leadership; (iv) enrolment policy; and (v) the involvement of parents and carers.

Expectations relating to education delivery

Legislative obligations work in concert with community expectations to lead the case for improvement in educational practice and outcomes for students with disability. For these obligations to have greatest impact, they must be reflected in all relevant policies and programs and be recognised and understood universally among education leaders and practitioners.

There is a range of binding international obligations and legislative requirements that create a legal imperative for education providers to deliver the best possible education for students with disability, within an inclusive environment. Inclusive education for every student is both an educational means and goal. This review finds that policy should strive to reflect these principles. It is important that all educational practitioners throughout the sector are guided towards achieving these goals (and held accountable for doing so). Inclusive education, both as a goal and a practice, should be recognised as everybody's business.

Policies in place across Queensland were examined for reference to students with disability, and in particular, reference to guiding legislation. This review finds that the Department's broader strategic policy could be revised to ensure clearer reference to, and acknowledgement of, students with disability and the responsibilities that all those interacting with them are expected to uphold.

Awareness of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education (DSE), as well as the broader policy and legislative context, was tested through this review's survey and consultations. The findings indicate that there is scope for the Department to further strengthen the understanding of the prevailing legislation surrounding students with disability and its implications for school leadership and practice.

Recommendation 4-1: Legislative and policy awareness

- The Department should revise existing policies to ensure alignment with legislative obligations and, in particular, that the imperative to improve outcomes for students with disability is adequately reflected. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should ensure legislative requirements are translated into accessible guidelines. The support available for principals to navigate this area – including access to inclusion coaches and training – should be promoted widely and expanded if necessary. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

There are generally high levels of goodwill and commitment toward the achievement of outcomes for students with disability across the Queensland state schooling community. However, the review finds that a level of ambiguity exists regarding what these outcomes

are – that is, the expectations and aspirations for students with disability – and how they will be achieved. There are varying views regarding the features, characteristics and experiences of an inclusive schooling system. While the term ‘inclusive’ is commonly used, its interpretation and application vary considerably. Across Queensland, inclusive education is frequently used as a synonym for special education.

Creating an environment that supports and enables students with disability to achieve their potential requires a set of overarching objectives capable of effectively guiding and driving policy and practice. These objectives must align with legislative requirements, be definitive in their intent and provide a basis for demonstrating what the sector is striving to achieve and, in turn, how it will go about achieving this. A clear and ambitious vision is essential to effective action and better outcomes.

While it is important this vision not work to demarcate students with disability from the broader student population, affording a heightened level of priority to these students necessarily means recognising them as a priority cohort for action. Acknowledging that visions and objectives have only modest capacity to drive change, an accompanying plan for action is critical to making progress.

To this end, the existing *Inclusive Education Statement* can be strengthened by reaffirming objectives, refreshing its definition of inclusive education – both as a goal and as a type of practice – and, in doing so, providing a stronger signal to all schools regarding the commitment of the Queensland Government to high quality achievement for students with disability.

This statement should also incorporate an implementation strategy, which outlines not only the expectations of the sector, but the path and timeline towards achieving them. In concert with the *Every Student Succeeding* strategy, the statement can then serve as the mechanism through which the message that the education of students with disability is everyone’s business is consistently disseminated across the sector.

Ultimately, achievement in this area needs to be elevated and shown similar weight to other educational priorities. This will act as an instrument to drive cultural change toward a more aspirational, outcomes-orientated, accountable environment that is committed to every student. Over time, culture will adapt to reflect these changing expectations. However the Department can instigate a change in culture, providing stronger leadership to drive improvements in inclusion and outcomes for students with disability.

A strong policy statement that embodies the attitudes and embeds the language of an *every student counts* ethos is also essential to establishing a positive, inclusive, outcomes-orientated culture. Culture influences, and is also formed and perpetuated by, actions and behaviours at all levels and needs to be supportive of the goals for inclusive education. Indeed, it is among the most critical pre-requisites to the achievement of a system that is fully committed to generating the highest outcomes for every student.

Recommendation 4-2: Statement and implementation strategy

- The Department should establish a shared statement of the goals of inclusive education and develop an implementation strategy, to reflect the aspirations, goals and timeframes that the sector is committed to. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Recommendation 4-8: Culture change strategy

- The Department should conduct a culture assessment and implement a culture change strategy to reform perceptions and expectations of students with disability throughout the education community.
 - This culture change strategy should include a review of language included within schools, including position descriptions and nomenclature.
 - This should be considered in conjunction with recommendations relating to workforce strategy. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Sector and school-level accountability

Performance measurement and monitoring

Schooling systems are increasingly operating in a performance orientated environment. It is critical that performance as it relates to all students, or disaggregated performance as it relates to students with disability and other subgroups, is reflected in a way that serves to drive improvement and accountability. The focus on the education of students with disability within such frameworks has lagged, partly due to a lack of consistent measures across jurisdictions. This should not be considered an impediment to embedding performance and outcome measures into performance frameworks.

Significant progress has been made in the collection and reporting of evidence at the school level over recent years and the Department has clearly stated its expectations that existing monitoring and measurement tools are designed to deliver improvement for all students.

However, the existing performance frameworks (and associated measures and indicators) do not incorporate specific reporting for students with disability. Further improvements can therefore be made in how outcomes for students with disability are monitored and measured. Measurable outcomes and indicators for students with disability can be researched, established and explicitly included in performance and accountability frameworks and reporting mechanisms. In some instances this may require additional data collection, however this should be viewed not as an imposition on the sector, but rather as a vital investment in maximising the educational outcomes for every student.

A focus on disaggregation of outcomes for students with disability can be introduced into performance measures at the school and system level. Greater disaggregation should not be considered antithetical to a whole school or inclusive approach for students with disability, but rather as an instrument for raising visibility and improving accountability.

The judicious monitoring and measurement of inclusive practice and other intermediate indicators known to be correlated with educational outcomes has a role to play in driving higher outcomes and can aid in establishing Departmental accountability for inclusive practice at a school level.

Recommendation 4-3: Performance monitoring and measurement

- The Department should seek to ensure performance and monitoring measures, including goals and targets which reflect the Departmental priorities, are in place at the school level.
- These measures should include intermediate indicators that allow monitoring of the presence – or otherwise – of the conditions that underwrite achievement among students with disability. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Monitoring and evaluation

In addition to monitoring and measuring school-level performance, the education system is also responsible for delivering and monitoring programs at the system level – for reasons of scale or for trialling evidence-based policies.

The policy areas addressed in this review are often characterised by significant complexity, active research, and policy debate (such as complex behaviours and inclusive teaching).

It is therefore critical for a jurisdiction like Queensland to continually evaluate its understanding of effective policy and practice as it relates to education of students with disability. While this information is partly obtained through school-level performance, it is equally important to evaluate policy at broader system level on a continuous basis.

The Department's Evidence Framework is a recent initiative which outlines the Department's strategic plan regarding how it will establish and use evidence. Building on this foundation, there are several steps that could be taken to further embed the role of evidence-based decision making across the state schooling sector:

- School-level evidence on effective practice, distributed through the Evidence Hub, could be enhanced by measuring and monitoring outcomes relating to students with disability at the school level.
- Although there has been an improved focus on implementation fidelity and improved practice in program delivery over time, greater effort is needed to embed evaluation of sector-wide programs and initiatives as a systematic activity.
- The introduction of greater disaggregation between students with and without disability in the analysis of sector-level outcomes data would enable broader consideration of the outcomes for students with disability, assist in better targeting resources where needed and identify sector strengths and weaknesses in terms of quality education provision and services for students with disability.
- Research on contemporary educational practice, as well as data on what works within Queensland schools, needs to be conducted and collated and shared across the sector.

Recommendation 4-4: Evidence base in the education of students with disability

- All programs should be implemented in accordance with the Department's overarching monitoring and evaluation framework, with lessons continually drawn from the evolving evidence base to inform refinement of policy and practice.
- Indicators of outcomes for students with disability should be incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of all schooling programs.
- The Department should continue to develop and promote the *Evidence Hub* and other evidence resources and, in doing so, ensure schools maintain access to contemporary research and resources relating to effective practice for students with disability.
- Teachers should be upskilled on data literacy, and an evaluative culture developed throughout schools.
- *This recommendation should be implemented immediately.*

Sector governance and leadership

In a high performing education system, leadership and governance serve as powerful drivers of outcomes and effective forces of change. In the immediate term, this will mean assembling a taskforce of the calibre and authority required to take the accepted recommendations of this report forward with urgency and purpose. Over the longer term, it will mean ensuring that the achievement of outcomes among students with disability is afforded the highest priority by the sector's leadership and that system governance and leadership is geared toward installing and maintaining a sector-wide culture aligned with the established objectives.

Over recent years, the Department has vastly increased its commitment and visibility in the area of education for students with disability, including the notable establishment of the Autism Hub as a centre for research and professional development in the field, and the employment of professional coaches. The Department is in a unique position to role model ownership of action for students with disability – in both state schools and regional offices – and can develop a stronger internal structure aimed at driving and sustaining this action (the nature of which may differ in the short term), until it is genuinely considered everyone's business. Efforts to improve outcomes for students with disability encounter resistance from a range of sources, for a variety of reasons. An agenda to improve outcomes for students with disability must be cognisant of these factors, but not dissuaded by them, and those responsible for executing this agenda must be confident they have the requisite resources and authority to pursue it.

Effective governance and leadership must also support the acknowledgement and, as appropriate, incorporation of stakeholder views into policy and practice design. This review notes the Department's current engagement with some stakeholder groups, but finds that it could more systematically engage with and support the sector and its various stakeholder perspectives.

Recommendation 4-7: Sector governance and leadership

- In the short term, the Department should introduce a taskforce aimed at implementing the recommendations of this review that are accepted by the Government, and building the foundations required to progress the Department's vision of inclusive education. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - A senior officer should be assigned to this position with an appropriate level of authority to lead the implementation of an inclusive education agenda.
 - The taskforce should be multi-disciplinary and should comprise members from policy, program and operations areas across the Department.
- A communications and engagement strategy for the broader disability and school education sectors should be established in the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
- In the long term, system governance and leadership must appropriately maintain this area of policy as an area of priority, and balance the need for a visible function for disability and inclusion, with the integration of inclusive principles and disability awareness across all areas of the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

Enrolment policy

Consistent with the legislative framework outlined earlier, it is a widely held view among academics, advocates and community groups alike that the default setting of education for students with disability should be in regular schools, and that a system should strive towards universal delivery in this mode of education. Domestic and international policy encourages education providers to not just deliver the best possible education for students with disability, but to do this within inclusive settings.

The international evidence is clear that these are the environments that best support outcomes achievement among students with disability and indeed that best support high performing school systems overall.

Enrolment policy should be made with consideration of the benefits (as expressed in long term educational and wellbeing outcomes) as well as the costs (including the impost of educational choices on the families and the cost to the system of providing school education) of alternative school settings, as well as explicit reference to these legislative obligations.

However, enrolment policy must be pragmatic in balancing the pursuit of what is an increasingly accepted preferred model against the systems that today's policymakers and sector leaders have inherited, wherein regular schools are not currently universally suited to meeting the educational needs of all students with disability. It will accordingly take time, and require the effective implementation of the recommendations of this review, before Queensland schools are universally equipped to educate all students with disability to leading contemporary standards.

With these elements in mind, a shift towards more mainstream school settings must be carefully planned and executed, within the broad framework of iterative improvements in inclusive practice across all schools.

Recommendation 4-5: Special school enrolment policy

- The Minister’s policy for enrolment of students with disability in special schools should be periodically reviewed following assessment of improvement in practice in regular schools and a review of the role and operation of special schools. *This recommendation is for further review.*

Parent and carer involvement

Strong and informed parent and carer involvement is a hallmark of an effective policy environment, characterised by parents and carers having the knowledge and capability to advocate for their children through formal and informal avenues.

School education can be positively enhanced through parent and carer engagement (as can the home environment through engagement with the school and school staff). While the review has uncovered instances of highly effective involvement of parents and carers in their child’s education and the tailoring of students’ education experience to their unique needs, it has also found that practice in this area is extremely variable. As such, improvements in the consistency with which the education sector involves parents and carers in their child’s education is an essential element of improving outcomes for students.

Every school should be welcoming and supportive of the rights of all students who are entitled to enrol in their chosen school. From the evidence assembled to inform this review, it is apparent that Queensland parents can be subject to a range of influences, at the school level, to discourage enrolment in regular schools and classrooms. Acknowledging that this issue has a range of origins, parents must be well informed of their rights and have access to quality information and resources to support their child’s enrolment at their local school. Without an active body of community organisations providing effective advocacy, parents and carers lack the information required to make the best decisions for their children and lack the support they often require to pursue action in the event that the sector falls short of meeting their requirements.

As well as effective engagement at the school level, ensuring the best possible outcomes for students with disability requires parents and carers having access to mechanisms that aid them in voicing concerns or raising complaints regarding the education experience their child is receiving. Protracted complaints are damaging to all parties – for the Department in regard to litigation costs, and for children with disability who are often kept out of school for long periods of time. They also tend to generate high levels of counterproductive anxiety for all parties. The existing complaints mechanisms for parents to take issues forward with the Department and with external bodies should be monitored to ensure they are meeting the needs of the whole education community, including the schooling sector, parents and the broader public. It is important that processes be established to encourage fair and respectful conciliation. It is also essential that transparent reporting and analysis is in place.

Recommendation 4-6: Community and parental engagement

- In order to enable parents to make informed decisions, the Department should disseminate advice to schools, parents and the broader education community on the effectiveness and appropriateness of different settings, with regard to the long-term outcomes of students.
- The strength of parental advocacy at the school level should be bolstered through the facilitation of discussion groups, dissemination of resources for parents, and referral to advocacy groups.
- Monitoring of complaints should be undertaken centrally and should be granted a high priority by the Department.
 - This will enable the Department to build consistency in how complaints are treated throughout the state, and will serve to limit the escalation of complaints and lessen the periods of disruption to a student’s participation in school.
- *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Effective practice

An examination of effective contemporary practice in inclusive education was conducted and then cross-referenced with the data collected through surveys and school consultations about practice at the school and system level. While the review has not conducted a practice audit, it has nevertheless observed a broad sample of the practice taking place in Queensland state schools and allowed for an assessment of the concordance of this practice with leading international approaches.

Many of the challenges discussed are common across other jurisdictions, and are by no means unique to the Queensland state schooling sector.

Practice elements considered below include: (i) curriculum and pedagogy; (ii) behaviour management; (iii) workforce capacity and capability in inclusive education; (iv) professional collaboration and information sharing; and (v) physical environment.

Curriculum and pedagogy

Many students with disability are able to achieve results commensurate with their peers, provided the necessary adjustments are made to the way in which they are taught and assessed.

It is widely accepted that the goals of curriculum and pedagogy in inclusive education should be about ensuring, as far as possible, that *all students* can participate in the same learning.

The current P-12 Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework (P-12 CARF) is supportive of a whole school approach. This approach, within the Queensland context, has built on best-practice models including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Response to Intervention (RTI).

There are opportunities for further improvements in the adoption of the whole school approach, and the delivery of education within classrooms according to the P-12 CARF. The implementation of the P-12 CARF could also be aided through a revision of the materials and guidance associated with teaching and learning. Specifically, there is potential for resources currently produced by the Department about the development and delivery of a pedagogical framework to be revised to use similar language to the resources that advocate the whole school approach.

The review found that many schools and teachers, while committed to improving outcomes for all students, struggled in practice with implementing a whole school approach. Teacher survey respondents identified the main challenges of differentiation as the lack of teacher capability to differentiate, and the amount of time needed for preparation.

A coordinated response to improve whole school practice offered throughout the state would need to ensure adequate workforce capability and resourcing to provide classroom-wide adjustments.

The review sought to understand the nature and extent of individual adjustments for students with disability. Teachers are expected to use a range of individual adjustments to provide support for students to adopt the Australian Curriculum. Where students with disability require adjustments to year-level expectations, teachers must develop an Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) with parents and carers, to adjust the learning focus and determine the learning expectations.

ICPs were generally recognised as an effective tool for differentiation and inclusion in the classroom. Their use has corresponded with a large increase in the proportion of students with disability accessing the Australian Curriculum. It will be important for the Department to monitor their use over time within the context of a whole school approach.

Recommendation 5-1: Curriculum and pedagogy

- The implementation of the P-12 CARF should be aided through a revision of the materials and guidance associated with teaching and learning. The guide to developing a pedagogical framework at the school level should be explicitly linked to the P-12 CARF and whole school approach resources offered by the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The use of Individual Curriculum Plans should be incorporated into system-wide monitoring and data analysis, and monitoring of their use should aim to ensure schools are working towards modifying age-appropriate curriculum for delivery in classrooms. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Behaviour management

Behaviour management policy

Students with disability in Queensland schools are subject to greater use of school disciplinary absences (SDAs) than students without disability, as evidenced throughout consultations with teachers and parents, and in examination of the administrative data.

One of the reasons for this can be traced to a poor understanding of the link between learning and behaviour. The Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students templates and guidelines encourage articulation of behaviour management strategies with reference to the school's learning strategy, however this intention has not fully translated into actions across schools.

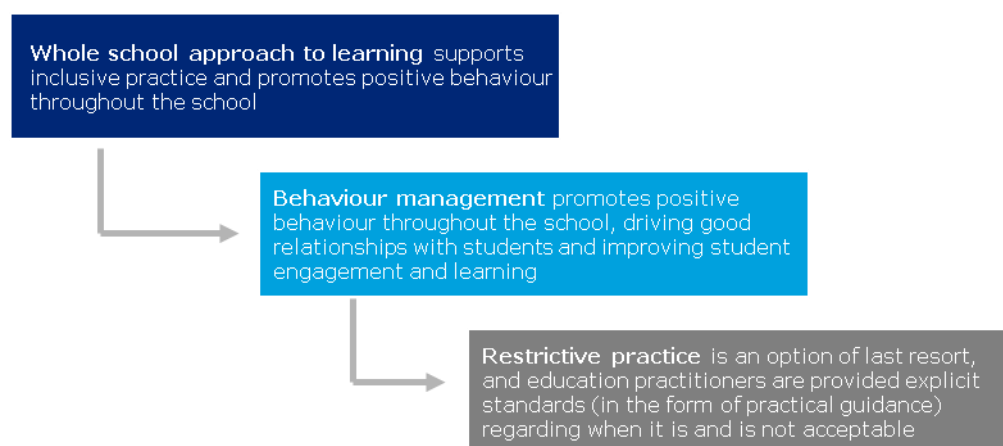
Use of SDA as a measure of engagement should be incorporated into measurement frameworks and used to measure improvements in policy change over time. In order to drive improved engagement over the long term, schools need to understand the relationships between teaching practice and behaviour of students.

This is the broad intention of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) and the whole school approach outlined in the Queensland whole school policy. The sector could allocate additional resources to ensure schools are translating the intention of the Responsible

Behaviour Plan for Students into practice – and this could be achieved through the training associated with PBL. Indeed, given the weight of evidence behind it, there is sufficient justification for supporting implementation of PBL with a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and commensurate resourcing and support from the Department.

Under a preferred approach, the use of behavioural management techniques, including restrictive practices, should sit as part of a broader school policy relating to effective teaching and learning. An example of a behaviour cascade framework reflecting this is outlined in Figure i below.

Figure i Desired behaviour management framework



Restrictive practice

The use of *restrictive practice* is an area of policy that all jurisdictions are challenged by. Consultations undertaken throughout this review and submissions made to it indicated the use of restrictive practice in Queensland state schools. They also revealed uncertainty and ambiguity regarding the circumstances under which restrictive practice is and is not permitted under current policy.

This review finds that restrictive practice should be used as a measure of last resort to prevent harm to staff and students and that the likelihood of such scenarios arising can be significantly reduced through culture, pedagogy and effective behaviour management.

The schooling sector needs explicit standards regarding the instances where restrictive practices are and are not acceptable and clearer and more practical guidance needs to be issued to principals, teachers and other school staff.

Despite reporting procedures being in place for planned and unplanned use of restrictive practices, no centralised data is collected or analysed on the use of restrictive practice across schools. The central and regional offices should play an ongoing role in monitoring the use of restrictive practices within individual plans and monitoring the unplanned use of restrictive practice.

In the longer term, increasing the capacity of schools to improve practices as they relate to differentiation in teaching and learning, and behaviour management, is a necessary precursor to reducing restrictive practices to the greatest extent possible.

Ultimately, Queensland state schools should set a target pursuant to the elimination of restrictive practices. This is an aspirational target, however it is one that will ultimately lead educational practitioners to adopt whole school inclusive practice.

Recommendation 5-2: Behaviour management and policy

- The Department should ensure that all schools articulate their Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students in conjunction with a school-wide policy that incorporates differentiation in teaching and learning. The Department should review its current suite of behaviour management policies, including the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, to drive the adoption of these principles among schools into the future. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - One potential model for this, which is currently already in place across Queensland schools, is PBL. The Department should trial the implementation of PBL with strict implementation fidelity.
- The Department should incorporate disaggregated use of SDA for students with and without disability into headline measures of outcomes for schools, regions and the system as a whole. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Recommendation 5-3: Restrictive practices

- Uncertainty and risk associated with the use of restrictive practice by teachers should be reduced through clear, unambiguous advice from the central office, and the requirement that restrictive practice use is articulated in a Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students.
- The Department should measure and monitor the use of restrictive practice (both planned and unplanned) with the aim of minimising use to the greatest extent possible. The Department should examine existing methods of data collection across schools to collect this information. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

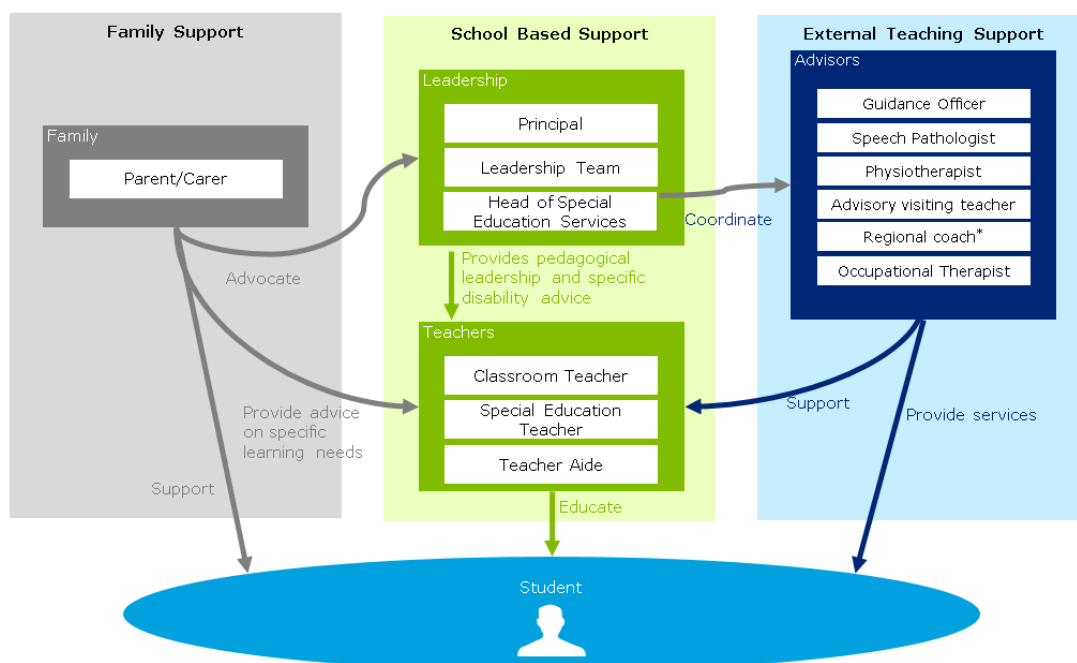
Workforce capacity and capability in inclusive education

Achieving the established goals for students with disability relies on capacity building across the Department's administrative and support portfolios and, most particularly, in its schools.

School principals and leadership teams require support to build knowledge and skills in inclusive education and cultural transformations, and to develop and deliver pedagogical frameworks which support the effective education of every student.

The workforce at the school level represents a complex mix of skills and relationships which intersect to create a supportive framework for all students (Figure ii).

Figure ii Example of a school level workforce to support education of students with disability



In an effective school working environment, different staff play complementary roles in enabling learning for students with disability.

- Teachers are responsible for delivering curriculum to students with a range of different abilities and translating a school-level pedagogical framework into practice.
- School leaders are vital to the success of students and the school. They are responsible for communicating the intention of policy to the teachers at their school, managing their school’s improvement strategy, and ultimately leading the delivery of practice within the classroom.
- Under a more inclusive title, the Head of Special Education Services (HOSSES) can play a larger role in professional development, the development and teaching of whole school curriculum, and in the advancement of all staff in the education of students with disability.
- By working collaboratively with specialists from outside education, schools can deliver a service for students with disability which incorporates their personal and health needs, as well as provide additional support and training to teachers.

Coordinating an approach

The Department is best placed to provide leadership in building professional development. Coordinating this across Queensland’s teaching workforce of over 52,000 teaching and non-teaching staff is a major undertaking that needs to be mindfully approached if the best results are to be achieved. A specific branch within the Department could serve as the organisational hub, to ensure the workforce can build its inclusive education capability over time. This branch should be responsible for coordinating all aspects of professional development recommended throughout this review, including internal professional development, liaison with teacher education faculties, development and distribution of professional learning resources.

This branch should also have responsibility for driving a workforce strategy which builds the skills the Department wants in the classroom through selection and development of staff:

- **Hiring structures** which outline inclusive education practice as a selection criteria will, in the long term, help drive the market towards adoption of these skills and aptitudes.
- **Ongoing professional development** is necessary for teachers to be able to continue developing their skills in teaching and learning differentiation, and behaviour management.
- Access to **real-time training** for specialised situations is necessary in ensuring teachers can get access to resources relating to specific disabilities and student types.

Pre-service training

Education academics and teachers have noted that competencies reflective of teacher professional standards, particularly the skills needed in contemporary classrooms with diverse students, can be more consistently adopted throughout the initial teacher education curriculum. Teachers, principals and academics consulted throughout this review have pointed to the current state of *pre-service training* as inadequate for the task of achieving more inclusive schooling. Initial teacher education programs are not delivering the curriculum required for school staff to develop these skills – with particular reference drawn to practical education within diverse classrooms and instruction in UDL.

Specialist resources

This review acknowledges the importance of specialist support, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech language pathologists, in directly working with students with disability, and in helping to develop teachers to better provide support for students. The principal method of delivery of these services presently is through staff allocated directly to schools and Special Education Programs (SEPs), as well as the itinerant staff located within regional offices.

These highly specialised human resources have a strong base outside the state schooling sector itself, and other systems within Australia incorporate models with schools working collaboratively with external specialists. Into the future, the Department should continue to consider service delivery options that intersect with the disability sector to complement the services delivered by the Department, particularly for high needs students or students in remote parts of the state.

Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability

- The Department should introduce a function designed to coordinate professional development in the area of inclusive education across the state schooling sector, with the structure of this function incorporating existing areas of professional development. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should work with universities to ensure adoption of inclusive education curriculum, and utilise existing levers for doing so. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should conduct a review of its workforce selection, retention and promotion model, including the following elements. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
 - Consideration in **selection** of professionals into the workforce.
 - **Induction processes** which introduce staff to the environment they are likely to face, the culture they reflect, and the standards of practice they will be supported to uphold.
 - **Effective professional development** – revised with a view to ensuring that quality content is delivered, and that sustained improvement is undertaken.

Wellbeing and support for school staff

The education of students with diverse learning needs has been described as challenging for all school staff. In addition to requiring development of advanced educational knowledge and understanding, teachers need to deal with complex and challenging behaviours, and are faced with numerous emotional challenges given the difficulties children with disability can face with existing educational programs. Teachers should not be dissuaded by these challenges and must be supported by the system when teaching students with a range of abilities. Change in the expectations of teachers should be accompanied by a clear expectation of levels of support to accommodate that change.

Professional collaboration and information sharing

Inclusive education is a complex area of teaching practice, and as a profession, educators and school leaders are often required to consider a significant volume of research to inform their practice and management policies. The central office has a role to play in collating and synthesising this research, and disseminating this across the entire education community in an accessible and readily applicable fashion.

School-level analytical capacity

Similar to other jurisdictions, the schooling sector has in recent years made significant progress in the development of school-level analytical capability, including through provision of data and access to evidence based tools and strategies. These resources and capabilities have not been fully utilised to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs. The central office has a key role in assisting schools to adapt these tools to aid in school-level analysis of the education of students with disability.

Recommendation 5-5: School-level analytical capability

- Schools should be provided with advice on how to utilise their information bases to determine effectiveness of approaches for students with disability. Education practitioners should be upskilled in data literacy and how to utilise data relating to a wide range of achievement and diverse learning needs. This focus on students with disability should be introduced alongside broader developments with the Evidence Hub. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

Professional collaboration

It is apparent from the learning tools developed through the More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) initiative, Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C), and other resources examined throughout this review that the Department does distribute evidence-based resources relating to inclusive education to teachers and principals. However, according to both principals and teachers consulted during this review, assistance in applying this knowledge to their teaching could be improved.

The central office has recently worked to establish a resource base for use in schools around practices including Universal Design for Learning and Response to Intervention in schools, and plans to publish these resources externally. Formal and informal information sharing opportunities between educators may further strengthen educators' capability to deliver inclusive education. Communities of Practice and the existing HOSES conferences are an exemplar of this type of activity.

As a central function, and in recognition of the information disparity found in school consultations, the Department has a role to play in ensuring that all schools are kept informed of contemporary leading practice and opportunities available to them. An existing array of resources offered by the Department introduces teachers to differentiated teaching and learning, and highlights further study teachers can do in this space. A number of effective teaching and development models, which are in place to varying degrees across Queensland state schools, can help to transfer skills and knowledge between teachers. Facilitated opportunities for teachers to discuss their practice, and share their stories, with one another would promote better understanding of teaching practice for students with disability.

Recommendation 5-6: Professional collaboration

- The Department should effectively utilise existing levers to facilitate knowledge sharing among staff – including good news stories as they relate to students with disability, and examples of effective practice. Particular attention regarding collaboration and sharing should be applied to students at transition points – including the transition from pre-schools and early childhood development programs into primary school; and from primary into secondary schools. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Physical environment

Schools' physical design and characteristics play an important role in creating an educational setting conducive to diverse groups of students – including students with disability – learning as effectively as possible.

The principles of Universal Design should be applied to the school environment so that it is suitable to provide education for students with a range of needs. The review finds that existing infrastructure in Queensland is not purpose built to achieve this end and widespread modernisation will take time.

Consultation within the Department highlighted that considerations of design, as they relate to access for students with disability, are currently under consideration. This process should ensure that no new buildings are developed without an explicit consideration of the Department's inclusive education statement and implementation strategy.

Resourcing model

In 2015, the Queensland Government released *Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland*. This policy paper outlines the importance of using resources to support student learning and commits the Department to develop a model for state school resourcing which is (1) simple, (2) predictable, (3) flexible, and (4) based on need. These four principles provide a mechanism for ensuring that this review of resourcing is consistent with the directions of broader state school resourcing in Queensland. Accordingly, they are adopted as the overarching point of reference in this review.

Like all areas of social policy, school resourcing generally – and resourcing for students with disability specifically – operates within fiscal constraints. The imperative, given this, is to ensure that resources are allocated and used in ways that support attainment of the highest educational outcomes for students that they can. The challenges associated with practically achieving this are challenges that all schooling systems continue to confront – the goal of optimal resourcing is one no jurisdiction has been able to fully achieve.

Against this backdrop, the state schools sector should be working towards two mutually reinforcing ends: (1) to ensure that students with disability are provided with the adjustments they need to ensure full participation in the classroom, and (2) to move practice to a more inclusive model in which individual adjustments become less necessary. For this reason, this section examines resourcing for students with disability from the perspective of individual adjustments, and how these are supported, as well as the provisions for whole school support.

Orienting resourcing towards student need

A resourcing model which supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential is one which ensures that resources are targeted in accordance with variation in educational need across the schooling system, including as it manifests among students with disability. That is, one where schools whose students require relatively greater levels of adjustment and educational support to achieve learning outcomes on the same basis as their peers receive relatively greater levels of resourcing.

Individual adjustments

The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is established on a measure of educational need (the EAP Profile). The EAP profile is intended to serve two purposes – (1) guide staff in determining an appropriate educational response to a student's disability, and in mainstream schools (2) allow the system to allocate resources in accordance with relative needs as reflected across schools.

Evidence provided to this review by guidance officers was that the EAP profile has aided in determining appropriate responses to support students with disability. However, consultations and the survey highlighted a misalignment between the diagnostic model under the EAP and actual resourcing needs of students with disability.

EAP incorporates, as a first step, the diagnosis of a disability under one of six categories. The use of this diagnosis to determine eligibility for additional support raises the possibility that students with additional educational needs originating from non-recognised EAP categories are not adequately reflected. A diagnosis-based model of resourcing has been shown in other contexts to lead to *diagnostic substitution*¹ - where parents and carers seek diagnosis of a particular disability to gain access to a program. The current system of verification and validation for resourcing provided under the EAP has been noted in consultations to be burdensome and as producing an over-reporting of the need for educational adjustment (albeit a well-intentioned one). While this does not result in over-resourcing at the system level, it does potentially impact the distribution of resources across students and schools.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) aims to recognise and reflect the educational adjustments of students in the context of their school environment and existing whole school support. Through reference to a set of qualitative practical descriptions of what is meant by adjustment and differentiated practice it is, in principle, able to benchmark the levels of educational need for students with disability relative to other students across the state (and country).

Because of its relative state of infancy, NCCD lacks a method of quality assurance to ensure accuracy in collection, or consistency across the population. For this reason, is not *currently* suited as a measure of need for the purposes of resourcing. However, its potential power as a measure of adjustment which achieves both aims of a concept of need is acknowledged.

The recent announcement by the Australian Government that its funding would, for the first time, be allocated according to the NCCD definition of disability,² provides a signal that Australian Government funding policy will over the longer term give consideration to establish the NCCD as a method of resource allocation more broadly.

The Department should continue to engage with the Joint Working Group on the development of the NCCD collection. The suitability of NCCD to determine funding should be reviewed at appropriate junctures in its development. In the meantime, The Department should similarly conduct a review into the feasibility of modifying the diagnostic and verification elements of the EAP, to better reflect a range of educational needs.

Recommendation 6-1: Reviewing the measure of disability

- The Department should continue to engage with the Joint Working Group on the development of the NCCD collection.
- The suitability of NCCD to determine funding should be reviewed at appropriate junctures in its development.
- In the meantime, The Department should similarly conduct a review into the feasibility of modifying the diagnostic and verification elements of the EAP, to better reflect a range of educational needs.
This recommendation is for further review.

Whole school support

Whole school support involves significant investments in professional development and staff time in developing and implementing programmatic and teaching reform. It is

¹ Coo, et al, (2008)

² Joint Statement by Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham and Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, *Responsibly investing in education*, 3 May 2016

apparent from consultations that the amount, and type, of resources allocated to whole school support is not perceived as commensurate with the expectations placed on schools to adopt whole school practice.

Currently, 25% of funding under the students with disability staffing model is targeted towards helping schools provide adjustments for students who are not verified with a disability, but who have a disability as defined under the DDA. This 25% funding component is informed by enrolment numbers and the socioeconomic status of the school.

Evidence collected throughout this review indicates that this resourcing element is not necessarily meeting its intended purpose:

- Across the school consultations conducted to inform this review, schools commonly failed to acknowledge the 25% allocation when asked about their equity allocations, or allocations for students with disability.
- At the same time, parents expressed a view their child was missing out on educational adjustments if they did not meet eligibility criteria.
- Administrative data shows that the prevalence of disability (as captured through either EAP or NCCD) is highly correlated with socio-economic status. However, this measure is not necessarily targeted at addressing educational needs as they relate to students with disability requiring individual adjustments.

Resourcing should be allocated towards need with a clear goal and direction in mind. The current model is intended to signal to schools that the 25% allocation is provided to aid in educational adjustments for students with disability, however the effective use of these resources at the school level is impeded by uncertainty regarding their expectations and intent (including the students that they should be directed towards).

This review has made recommendations to revise the way in which students requiring individual adjustments are measured by the system and resourced. While these revisions are being made, the Department has the potential to strengthen the messaging that accompanies funding to help schools adopt better whole school practice and support all students with disability (whether verified or otherwise).

Recognising local context

Leading resourcing models provide resources in a manner which allows for flexible targeted use towards priority areas of investment as determined by school leadership. However, school-level decision making alone is not sufficient for improved outcomes through investments of resources. Appropriate supports and accountabilities must be in place to ensure effective school-level decision making and resource use.

In consultations examining resourcing for students with disability, schools raised that the use of resources at the school level is only partly influenced by the design of the resource allocation model. That is, use of the whole school allocations noted above varies. Current resourcing policy enables this through the allocation of resources for students with disability to the school, not the student,³ allowing schools to make the most appropriate investments, given their cohort and school context.

However, there are limits on flexibility under the current model. Resourcing for whole school support and individual adjustments is presently allocated under fixed resource types which, despite some scope to adjust the resource mix at a local level, can work to limit flexibility in resource use.

³ Despite this, there is a justified perception amongst many parents that resources which have been attracted based on an enrolment of their child should be allocated directly to their child.

Simple and transparent resourcing

The motivation for simplicity of design in resourcing models is to ensure ease of understanding and administration for both governments and individual schools. This in turn limits costs of compliance and oversight and supports transparency and, by extension, confidence in the system. However, the benefits of transparency must be weighed against those associated with reliably recognising and addressing variation in educational need. In this sense, the measure of need and its associated assessment mechanism is, as noted above, a central consideration.

More broadly, resourcing for education of students with disability is driven by a number of complex instruments which comprise a unique combination of different measures of need, including two separate but similar measures of socioeconomic status. This complexity can send mixed signals to principals regarding how resources should be used. In particular, it can contribute to uncertainty regarding the intended purpose of different resourcing streams and how closely tied to individual students or student groups these streams are.

Schools should be provided with a simple representation of their resourcing which has been allocated for students with disability, clearly outlining the basis for this allocation and the expectations relating to its use. Clarity of expectations will support schools in more effectively utilising the available resources to meet the education needs of their students on a whole school level.

Predictable and sustainable funding

School-level predictability

Schools are able to operate and plan most effectively when they have an understanding of their expected resourcing over time. Consultations conducted as part of this review highlighted that the current approach to funding based on Day 8 enrolment figures leaves schools exposed to risk in enrolment fluctuations throughout the year. This is not an issue unique to students with disability, however the high levels of per-student resourcing that some students attract can amplify its impacts.

To help address this, the system provides some resourcing at the regional level and distributes to schools on an as-needs basis throughout the year. While in principle the timing and frequency of resourcing allocations could be modified to ensure ongoing alignment with enrolment levels, the administrative complexity associated with pursuing this risks being prohibitive.

Sector-level predictability and sustainability

Sustainability in school resourcing is a notion which must balance overarching fiscal constraints with the need to ensure resourcing appropriately reflects changes in educational need. As history in many jurisdictions has shown, disability services is an area where fiscal management must be especially prudent.

Since 2011, growth in enrolments of students with disability in Queensland state schools has outstripped general enrolment growth almost four times – 6.0% per annum compared to 1.6% per annum⁴. Resourcing for students with disability has not *systematically* kept pace with enrolment growth, however measures have been taken to ensure resourcing adequacy. Within the overall fiscal envelope in which school resourcing is governed, growth in resourcing for students with disability should continue to recognise changing educational need, within the context of the broader school resourcing framework.

⁴ Department of Education and Training administrative data

Moving forward

Resourcing for students with disability should be (1) based on need, (2) flexible and respectful of local decision making, (3) simple, and (4) predictable. This review has identified potential improvements to existing resource arrangements based on these considerations, and outlined a set of guiding principles which the Department should consider in refining future resourcing arrangements for students with disability.

This review finds that there is an immediate need to generate a greater understanding among the schooling community – those responsible for school-level resourcing decisions in particular – regarding the intended use of the alternative resourcing streams for students with disability. Schools should be guided to utilise resourcing for students with disability in the context of the broader school resourcing model and recognising both whole school and individual student needs.

This would support more effective resource use and provide a message to schools that the system is committed to enabling them to deliver whole school support in addition to individual adjustments for students with disability. Accompanying communications should explicitly link to the whole school support policy and P-12 CARF, with the expectation that these flexible resources are used to implement those policies.

Recommendation 6-2: Aligning resourcing use with its intended purpose

- The messaging to schools that accompanies resource allocations intended to provide additional support for students with disability should be strengthened. The purpose and intent of this resourcing needs to be clearer and the basis for accountability stronger.
- Schools should be encouraged to consider the range of individual student needs within a whole school context and use their total available resource allocations to maximise student outcomes. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Over time, the resource allocation model for students with disability should continue to increase its orientation toward educational need, with consideration given to the scope for NCCD to support this. An appropriate balance between precision and simplicity must continue to be struck. The benefits of flexibility in supporting effective use of resources to meet whole school and individual student need should continue to be pursued in conjunction with the supporting guidance and oversight measures.

Recommendation 6-3: Future funding for students with disability

- The Department should consider resourcing for students with disability within the broader context of total school resourcing and in light of the proposed directions for NCCD. Resourcing arrangements should aim to support more targeted allocations informed by educational need across different settings. *This recommendation is for further review.*

Towards greater inclusiveness and higher outcomes

Creating a schooling system that supports every student achieving to the maximum of their ability has been – and to a significant extent remains – a major challenge for education systems across the world. While the legislative imperatives have become stronger and their intent less ambiguous, the challenge of crafting all features of an education system to practically and harmoniously foster and promote high quality

education for all remains an enduring one. In many respects, this is not surprising. Historical approaches have run counter to what is now a well-established and widely accepted philosophy of inclusive education. Unwinding the engrained effects of this takes time, but must be pursued vigorously to achieve progress.

The findings of this review demonstrate that Queensland's state schooling system is making progress in achieving universality in the standards of education it provides but that, like so many of its peers, further progress is required if it is to consistently support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential. A level of change and improvement will be required across all aspects of the system and among all its participants. These changes will of course take time – some more than others – and will require reassessing how resources are deployed and utilised across the system. But their mutually reinforcing nature means that through disciplined and coordinated reform, material progress be made in terms of academic achievement, engagement and wellbeing for students with disability.

This report outlines a clear imperative to improve current settings, a mandate to guide change, and clear, overarching directions on where and how that improvement can and should occur. Encouragingly, every member of the state schooling community consulted through this review demonstrated a commitment to achieving better outcomes for Queensland students with disability. With a carefully developed action plan and the right drivers and information in place, this review finds the necessary reform achievable.

The accepted recommendations of this review will need to be carefully paced and introduced in an appropriate manner – implementation must be deliberate and purposive if it is to be successful in this complex area. However, the gains for students with and without a disability mean the returns to effectively doing so are significant and the case for staying the course therefore a strong one.

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