



School Guidelines: Maribyrnong Primary School Inclusion Protocol Guidelines

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Related Policies and Plans: Human Rights Act 2004 (amendments Jan 2009)

Introduction:

In 2002 the School Board agreed to establish a Learning Support Unit at the school. The school has a strong commitment to inclusivity and there was wide community support for the establishment of the LSU. A suitably qualified special education teacher was part of the staff and was an enthusiastic stakeholder in establishing the unit. A grant of \$6000 enabled Maribyrnong Primary to equip the unit. Consequently in January 2002, eight students with special needs were enrolled in the unit. Students with special needs are those who have been identified as having intellectual, sensory, physical, social/emotional, language/communication disability; a specific learning disability; or multiple disabilities. Students with special needs are entitled to access support from specialists and an appropriate, negotiated program, developed through recognition of the students' individual educational requirements.

The unit has proven to be a very successful initiative. The 8 students have developed academically and socially to the point where integration times for many of the students were becoming more complex. In order to adhere to the requirements of the Department's Equity and Diversity Plan the staff was keen to develop a protocol for current and future use, to ensure that best practice and consistency were applied at all times.

Rationale:

All students have the right to access a broad and balanced range of programs designed to meet their individual needs, preparing them for effective participation in the society in which they live.

Overview:

At Maribyrnong Primary School

- We provide our students with a caring and supportive school environment
- We deliver an excellent education for our students giving them the opportunity to develop their full potential
- We empower our students to experience success in their learning through the development of self-esteem, self-confidence, optimism, respect for others and the strong sense of achievement that comes with "doing their best"
- We provide equity and access to educational opportunities for students with special learning requirements
- We provide an education that will enable our students to thrive in the wider community
- We deliver highly effective student support through liaison with all relevant support agencies



Best Practice:

One study which assessed the effectiveness of inclusion was done at John Hopkins University Wisconsin. In a school wide restructuring program called Success For All, student achievement was measured. The study concluded that integration caused several positive changes:

- A reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness (Peck et al., 1992).
- Growth in social cognition (Murray-Seegart, 1989).
- Improvement in self-concept of non-disabled students.
- Development of personal principles and ability to assume an advocacy role toward peers and friends with disabilities.
- Warm and caring friendships (Bogdan and Taylor, 1989).

Role of the Special Education Teacher at Maribyrnong Primary School:

The key role of the special education teacher is to support and facilitate the education of the students in the Learning Support Unit. The special education teachers' responsibilities include

Liaison

- With parents/carers, classroom teachers, STA's, health care therapists, student support personnel, and relevant community organizations.
- To develop and implement appropriate programs (physical, social, emotional and academic).
- To ensure that student's mobility and other physical needs are being catered for.
- To ensure open discussion of ideas and concerns.
- To ensure that all appropriate people know what is being provided for each student.
- By coordinating visits from therapists and other services.
- By coordinating and implementing strategies and programs for individual students.

Support

- For students with special needs, classroom teachers and assistants, parent/carers.
- To ensure that the students experiences in mainstream classrooms are positive and productive by developing an Individual Learning Plan for each student.
- By overseeing the implementation of the ILP, discussing and assessing regularly and modifying where necessary.
- By providing information and resources to classroom teachers.
- By providing in-class support where possible.
- By initiating negotiations with classroom teachers for support.
- By ensuring that all mobility, exercise and continence equipment and aids are available and in working order.
- By ensuring that parents/carers are fully informed of their child's progress, as well as any concerns or needs.
- By ensuring that parents/carers are fully informed and involved in discussions and decisions affecting their child.



High Standards

The aim of the integration protocol is to ensure that student attainment is raised and student outcomes are improved.

Self-Assessment

The level of success of the integration program will be determined by action research. Action research is a process of change which recognizes that teaching and learning take place between and among people; therefore the emphasis is on collaboration. Action research is a process of enquiry into and reflection about a specific aspect or need at a particular site. Action research begins with a plan resulting from a specific need. Grundy (1995) refers to the elements of the action research process as reconnaissance, planning, acting, collecting evidence and reflecting. Action research will provide the staff with an opportunity to develop professionally through working collegially and purposefully to improve practice.

Innovation

This initiative was identified as a response to the awareness of teachers that the students in the learning support unit needed more interaction with age appropriate peers to give them further opportunities to develop friendships and networks amongst the mainstream students. It was noted that many of the students from the unit were participating positively and successfully in a broader range of mainstream activities with observable improvement in their performance. To facilitate the integration process the staff decided to formalize integration procedures with clear aims and objectives and a designated set of guidelines.

Professional Learning Communities

It is anticipated that inclusivity and integration will shape professional development experiences for the staff at Maribyrnong. This will be reflected in the teachers' professional pathways documents. Appropriate professional development will be delivered through staff meetings, stand down days and after hours sessions.

Quality Teaching

Teachers at Maribyrnong have accessed professional development in inclusivity over the past three years so that they are well prepared to cater to the needs of students with special needs. There are eight students with special needs in the mainstream classrooms and their disabilities are wide ranging. The teachers have developed expertise and confidence in catering to the needs of these children.

The integration of students from the learning support unit has been part of the school's practice since its introduction in 2002. This is supported through the redeployment of special teacher's assistants where necessary. Professional development is also provided when appropriate as are sharing and debriefing opportunities.



Integration Guidelines for Classroom Teachers

The following procedures have been discussed and developed by the staff to ensure that quality teaching is maintained.

- Children from the Learning Support Unit will have their own desk, chair, tote tray and equipment in their age appropriate mainstream classroom.
- Integration times will be negotiated between the mainstream teacher and the special education teacher.
- The duration of the integration will depend on the ability of the child and will be success based.
- A Special Teacher's Assistant will accompany the child to the mainstream classroom when appropriate.
- A uniform appropriate vocabulary will be developed for use by the school community.
- A degree of flexibility should be observed for those times when integration is unsuccessful.
- The special education teacher is responsible for the planning, assessment and reporting of the Learning Support students.
- The special education teacher will attend both junior and senior team meetings to ensure effective communication is maintained and an opportunity for discussion and debriefing is provided.
- Reverse integration activities will occur when appropriate e.g. bike riding, swimming and cooking.
- Students from the Learning Support Unit will commence the day with their mainstream class group and return to the unit at negotiated times.
- Learning Support Unit students will be included in assembly, concert, dance and relevant sports sessions with their age peers.
- Learning Support students will participate in excursions and camps with age peers.
- Staff will promote a positive attitude of mutual support, inclusion and communication.

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