

Improving the outcomes for students with disability in Queensland state schools

Education Improvement Research Centre
State Schools — Disability and Inclusion

Spotlight paper
July 2020



The Department of Education (DoE) is committed to our journey towards a more inclusive education system at all levels and as part of our everyday practice in schools, educational settings and classrooms. This paper discusses key insights from data collected by the Education Improvement Branch (EIB) in 2019 through the program of school reviews.

Since 2018, the EIB school reviews have included three lines of inquiry related to disability and inclusion. These lines of inquiry are linked to the key measures outlined in the *Every student with disability succeeding* plan (DET 2017):

- improving the A to E performance of students with disability
- increasing the proportion of students with disability receiving a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
- decreasing the proportion of students with disability receiving a school disciplinary absence (SDA)
- reducing the number of students with disability not attending a full-time program.

This paper presents the findings from the lines of inquiry data to help schools identify the next steps towards improving the outcomes for students with disability.

In 2019, review reports from 333 primary and secondary schools representing all education regions were examined for the lines of inquiry (special schools were not included in data collection). The proportion of students with disability in the cohort examined ranged from 3.8 per cent to 50 per cent of the student population (based on Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD)). Due to the specific nature of data collection, the findings reported in this paper may not reflect the full range of practices in schools, and therefore they need to be interpreted with caution. The findings apply to schools for which data were reported and cannot be extrapolated to bigger population of schools.



Success and wellbeing for all children and students through each stage of learning in an inclusive education system.

Every student succeeding, State Schools
Improvement Strategy 2020–2024

Findings from lines of inquiry in 2019

Improving the A to E performance of students with disability

Practices to monitor the achievement data of students with disability are established in a majority of schools for which lines of inquiry data were reported.

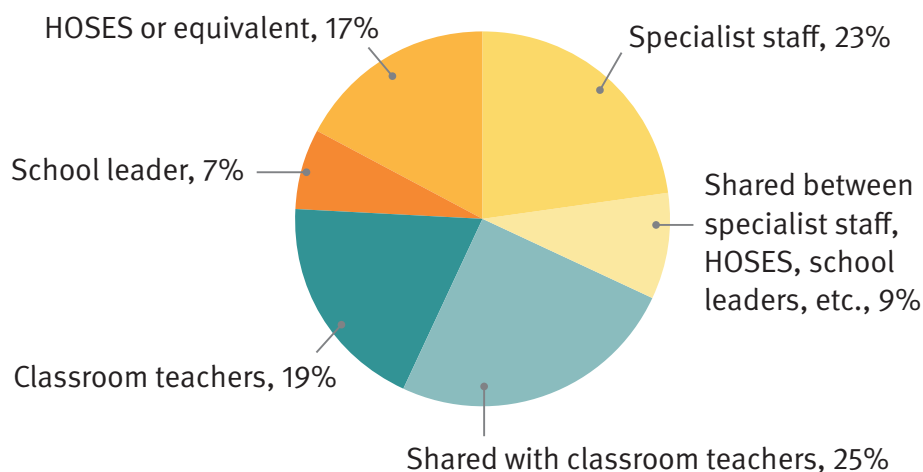
Monitoring student achievement is an essential practice that informs next steps in student learning and assists in continuous improvement of student performance. Lines of inquiry data regarding monitoring practices were reported for 260 schools (78 per cent). A majority of these schools reported the tracking and monitoring of the academic outcomes of students with disability. These practices were established in 67 per cent of schools, in 14 per cent of the schools they were emerging, while in 19 per cent of schools they were yet to be developed. Many schools also reported that they compare students with disability data against their year level cohort.

A collaborative approach to monitoring achievement data is emerging between class teachers, school leaders and/or specialist staff.

Some schools (151) indicated the staff responsibilities related to monitoring the achievement data (see Figure 1). In the majority of these schools, monitoring was the sole or shared responsibility of specialist staff, Heads of Special Education Services (HOSSES) or school leaders. In about a quarter of these schools (38), this practice was shared with classroom teachers.

Monitoring and analysis of achievement data were supported with OneSchool, dashboards and data walls, and often discussed in professional learning team (PLT) and leadership team meetings. Some schools also reported these data were used to inform individual learning programs, teaching interventions and strategies, reasonable adjustments and school-level initiatives.

Figure 1: Responsibilities for monitoring achievement data (N=151)



Increasing the proportion of students with disability receiving a QCE

Most secondary schools for which relevant lines of inquiry data were reported monitor the progress of students with disability in Years 11 and 12 towards attainment of a QCE or QCIA.

Senior secondary programs were offered in 72 of the 333 schools examined. For more than half of these schools (39) data on the tracking of QCE or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) attainment for students with disability were reported through lines of inquiry.

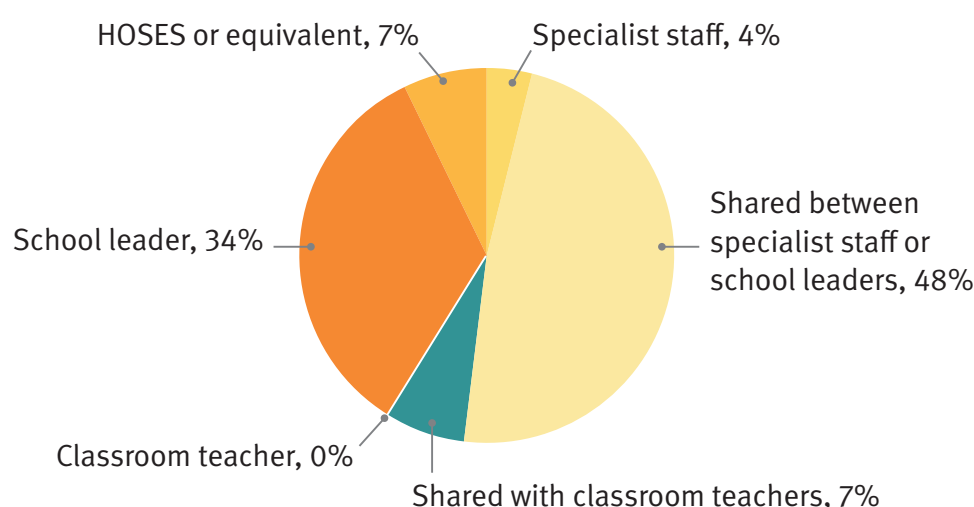
Nearly all of these schools (37) were monitoring the progress of senior students towards QCE or QCIA

achievement. Some reports provided detail about schools communicating on the progress of Year 11 and 12 students and described how these data are used to inform intervention strategies.

Sharing the responsibility for monitoring the progress of students with disability towards QCE or QCIA with classroom teachers is emerging.

Lines of inquiry data describing staff responsibilities for tracking of QCE or QCIA progress were reported for 27 schools. The responsibilities of progress monitoring were shared with classroom teachers in 7 per cent of these schools (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Responsibilities for monitoring QCE/QCIA data (N=27)



Decreasing the proportion of students with disability receiving a school disciplinary absence

Practices supporting students with disability with regard to SDAs include monitoring of SDA data, and less often, the identification of strategies to re-engage students with learning.

Lines of inquiry data related to SDA were reported for 78 schools. Practices supporting students with disability regarding SDAs were evident in the majority of these schools (83 per cent). Most often, schools were reported to monitor students with disability SDA data, with some schools having designated staff to identify required support prior to, during or after a SDA. A focus on reducing the occurrence of SDAs for students with disability through proactive supports was also evident. Students in some schools were supported upon their return to school, which usually included reviewing and adjusting individual learning and behaviour plans, with parents and carers considered important partners in this process.

Reducing the number of students with disability not attending a full-time program

A majority of schools for which relevant lines of inquiry data were reported monitor the attendance of students with disability.

Lines of inquiry data related to the attendance of students with disability were reported for 74 schools. Of these, 80 per cent had evidence of supporting practices. The majority of these schools monitored attendance of students with disability. This was often the responsibility of specialist staff. In some schools, students requiring additional support were referred to case managers, the inclusion team or student support services committees.

Monitoring and case management of students were identified as the main practices for managing part-time students with disability (relevant data reported for a low number of schools). Support teams, HOSSES (or equivalent) and school leaders case managed students with disability not yet attending full days. Specialist staff formulated plans where necessary in close partnership with families, with the aim to transition to full-time attendance within a designated time.



Next steps towards improving outcomes

The 2019 findings show that a majority of schools are monitoring the achievement and engagement data of students with disability. Monitoring, however, is just a starting point in the journey towards an inclusive school and education system. It is crucial that schools use the data monitored to inform decision making and development of strategies that result in improved outcomes for students with disability.

The key next steps for improving outcomes for students with disability, flowing from school review data, focus on:

- knowing your students and how they learn
- engaging with parents and carers
- responding to data and measuring impact.

These elements provide a sharp and narrow focus to help improve the engagement and outcomes for students with disability.

Know your students

It is vital to establish a shared understanding and clear responsibilities for collecting, recording, analysing and interpreting student engagement and achievement data. This enables schools to use data to better understand their students in order to plan and implement tailored, evidence-based, and inclusive strategies for teaching and learning.

Collecting and monitoring data of students with disability is most effective when developed as a whole-school

process. Disaggregating engagement and achievement data for student cohorts supports the identification of patterns and trends, informing analysis and discussion.

Based on these data, collaborative decisions regarding student support, allocation of resources and reasonable adjustments in teaching and learning can occur. This further supports all staff to take collective responsibility for the success of all students and develops their capability to include and engage all learners.

To generate discussion...

What formal processes support shared ownership, knowledge and analysis of engagement and achievement data of students with disability at our school?

How is disaggregated data collaboratively discussed and used at our school across subject, class and specialist teaching areas?

How does our school ensure that students with disability are progressing alongside their peers as evidenced through achievement and engagement data?

How does our school incorporate student voice as a data source in the planning and implementation of personalised strategies?

Engage with parents and carers

Parent and carer engagement in planning areas for improvement is integral to developing a deep understanding of our students, shared goals and agreed strategies. The *Every student with disability succeeding. Parent and community engagement* factsheet outlines a range of practices to encourage a collaborative approach to supporting students. According to *Disability Standards for Education*, to enable equitable access and participation in education, consultation with parents/carers and students is required to plan and implement personalised reasonable adjustments.

When engaging with parents and carers, the focus needs to be on building a 'Partnership Model' within a strengths-based framework guided by the following (Hornby, 2011):

- "value their knowledge of their child and their needs in making key decisions
- prioritise positive, good quality relationships with parents
- be open to working with parents and others
- build effective communications with parents, tailoring them for individual parents and teachers
- develop whole-school policies and practices that support parent-teacher partnerships".

To generate discussion...

How do our communications focus on improving student outcomes, enabling and valuing collaboration with parents and carers as partners?

How does our school engage students with disability and their parents and carers when developing personalised strategies and plans to support learning and engagement?

How does our school continue to nurture relationships with all parents and carers to ensure ongoing, productive and effective partnership in their child's learning?

When consulting with parents and carers, how does our school demonstrate all of the intentional and planned steps as outlined in the *Every student with disability succeeding. Parent and community engagement* fact sheet?

Respond to data and measure impact

Planning strategies to support students with disability is strengthened by knowing your students and engaging with parents and carers. A whole-school approach to collection and analysis of learning and engagement data helps identify a range of focused supports based on evidence of effective practice. Intentional collaboration around data discussions enable us to target resources to support students' engagement and achievement.

Collaboratively developed support strategies may include differentiation, focused and intensive teaching with personalised learning supports, and reasonable adjustments informed by multidisciplinary approaches when required. These strategies should be recorded systematically across the school to ensure continuity of implementation and transition support.

Student achievement and engagement data need to be reviewed regularly to measure the impact of implemented support strategies and interventions selected by school and individual teachers. School leadership teams, along with all staff, should routinely review outcomes across the school to ensure practices are evidence-driven, effective and inclusive at all stages of learning.

To generate discussion...

How does our whole-school strategic planning ensure that processes to support students with disability align with identified trends in the data?

How has a line of sight been established linking student data to pedagogy, curriculum, school-wide practices, and improved student outcomes?

How does our school use data monitoring processes to regularly evaluate that implemented practices are making a difference for all students with disability?

In what ways are our strategies agile and individualised to respond to continued improvement of outcomes for all students?



“...Targeted support can help learners such as ... children with disability to reach their potential. This means tailoring to the needs of individuals across a system that prioritises equity of opportunity and that supports achievement.”

Alice Springs (Mpartnwe) Education Declaration



Practical considerations - from data monitoring to better outcomes

Knowing your students

- Provide clarity in roles and responsibilities for all school staff in relation to monitoring data.
- Further build capability in effective data practices by enacting a whole-school process for intentional, collaborative discussions regarding student progress and next steps for improved outcomes.
- Disaggregate engagement and achievement data for students with disability and share data with all leaders, classroom, specialist and subject teachers.
- Triangulate and analyse disaggregated data to determine student learning needs and identify the barriers to attendance, learning, participation, engagement and achievement.
- Use data sets to develop processes that support students to successfully transition through stages of schooling.

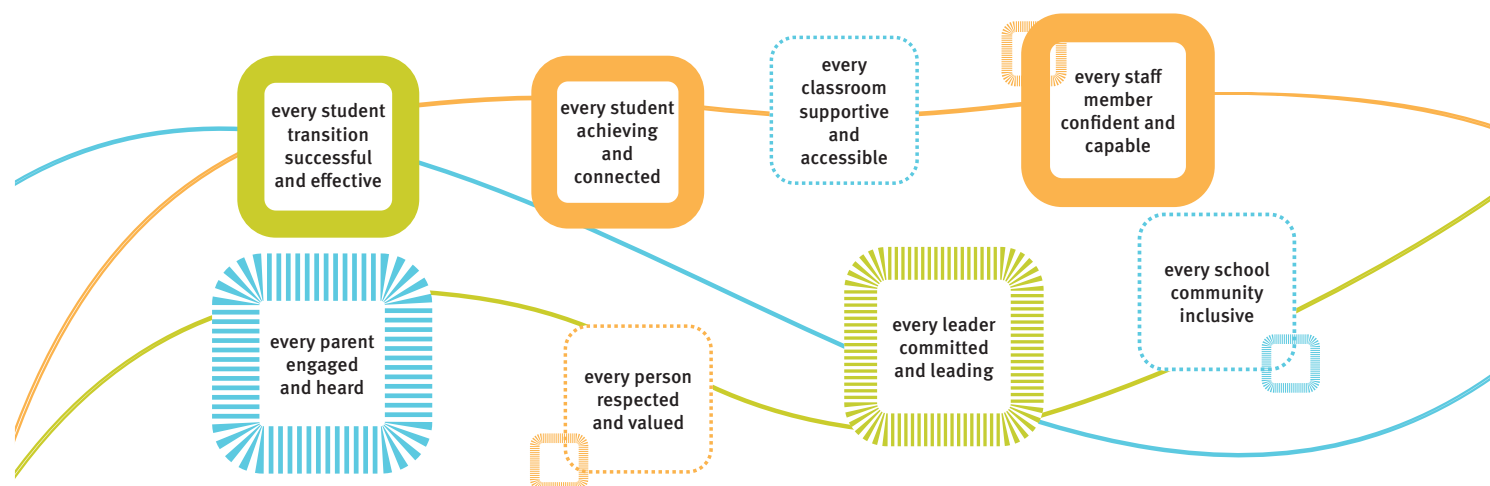
Engaging with parents and carers

- Create open communication channels and timely opportunities between parents and carers of students with disability and classroom teachers and specialist teachers to discuss learning, progress and next steps.
- Consult regularly with parents and carers, and students where appropriate, regarding planned personalised reasonable adjustments that support learning, participation, engagement and achievement.
- Involve parents and students in designing learning experiences, school events and activities that enable success and participation on the same basis as other students.
- Share and record collaboratively developed plans and agreements with all relevant stakeholders to support effective implementation.

Responding to data and measuring impact

- Use data to inform curriculum decisions and plan reasonable adjustments, differentiation, focused and/or intensive teaching, including case management processes.
- Align decision-making processes with the requirements of the P-12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework (P-12 CARF) including [Whole school approach to differentiated teaching and learning](#).
- Ensure robust processes to review curriculum decisions, particularly with regards to individual curriculum plans (ICP), using the latest assessment and reporting data.
- Provide ongoing support and professional development for staff in identified areas following data analysis, particularly in differentiation, reasonable adjustments and effective pedagogical practices for students with disability including the use of assistive technologies.
- Provide opportunities for teachers and school leaders to collaboratively discuss the effectiveness of practices and resources.
- Evaluate the impact of implemented strategies and adjustments, through the continued use of disaggregated achievement and engagement data.

Every student with disability succeeding



References and further reading

Department of Education and Training (DET) 2017, *Every student with disability succeeding*

Disability Standards for Education 2005

Education Council. 2019, *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*

Hornby, G 2011, *Parental involvement in childhood education: Building effective school-family partnerships*, Springer, New York.

Queensland Government Human Rights Act 2019

Resources

Queensland Department of Education – State Schools

[Inclusive Education policy](#)

[Every Student Succeeding—State Schools Improvement Strategy 2020-2024](#)

[P-12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework](#)

- Whole school approach to differentiated teaching and learning
- Students with disability
- Individual curriculum plan

[Reasonable adjustments](#)

[Parent Engagement](#)

[Every student with disability succeeding. Parent and community engagement](#)

[Inclusive education – Department of Education](#)

[Inclusive education – OnePortal](#)

Students with disability – Department of Education

- Every student with disability succeeding
- Education Adjustment Program
- Specialist staff
- Transition to post-school
- Vision Impairment
- [Autism Hub and Reading Centre](#)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Statewide Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Students with disability – OnePortal

- Curriculum and reasonable adjustments
- Student engagement
- Parent engagement
- School supports and resourcing
- Nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability (NCCD)
- Professional learning
- NDIS and supports outside school
- Queensland state special schools
- Early childhood
- Transitions through stages of learning

[Every student with disability succeeding – school data reflection tool](#)

[Signposts for school improvement – Inclusive education](#)

[Every student with disability succeeding – identifying next step](#)

[Inclusive Education – identifying next steps](#)

Evidence Studies

A series of seven evidence studies has been developed that document the processes, practices, pedagogies and models of change that schools have implemented, and which resulted in measurable impact on outcomes for students with disability.

Queensland Department of Education – Education Improvement Branch

[Insights papers](#) and [case studies](#) provide a snapshot of most recent findings from school reviews to inform school improvement and feature schools that have generated significant improvement gains.

Australian Government and Education Services Australia

[Disability Standards for Education e-learning](#)

[Nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability \(NCCD\)](#)

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

[Student diversity](#)

[Meeting the needs of students with a disability](#)

Community Resource Unit

[Families for inclusive education Resources, Webinars, Newsletters and Fact sheets to support parent/carers and school partnerships](#)



Reading

Booth, T & Ainscow, M 2002, *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in school*, CSIE, London.

Research

The Education Endowment Foundation

Summaries of the best available evidence, generating new evidence of 'what works' to improve teaching and learning and supporting teachers and senior leaders in using evidence.

Guidance Reports

Clear and actionable recommendations for teachers on a range of high-priority issues, based on the best available evidence.

- [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#)
- [Guidance report for primary and secondary schools to make the best use of Teaching Assistants](#)
- [Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning](#)
- [Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning](#)
- [Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools](#)

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

[Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Standard 1 – Know students and how they learn resources](#)

[High expectations](#)

[Analysing data to improve student learning](#)

Professional learning

QELi Leadership Programs for Leaders of Inclusion

Leading Inclusive School Practices is a six-month, multi-phase program that focuses on strengthening the capacities of leaders who lead inclusive practices.

QELi TV

Videos and voice recordings from some of the country's most experienced thought leaders and QELi Partners.

Online Coaching

For Individuals and Teams offers flexible and highly individual coaching as a means to understand the evolving landscape for you and your community.

Springfox's Thriving Through Change and Challenge

Discover potential for sustainable high performance through resilience and well-being.