

Building on Strengths



**Provision of Equity Services
for Students with Additional Needs
in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga**





Diocese of Wagga Wagga Vision Statement

In keeping with the evangelising Mission of the Catholic Church the Diocese of Wagga Wagga develops and affirms Catholic Schools which:

- † are committed to Jesus Christ and his Gospel;
- † know and celebrate our Catholic faith tradition;
- † educate the whole person: body, spirit, heart and mind;
- † promote education in the service of a better world;
- † provide our children with reasons for living, hoping and loving.



Mission Statement

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga are committed to being:

A Community of Faith:

- † centred on Christ and the sacramental life of the Church
- † living Gospel values according to Church teaching
- † working to foster the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth
- † learning about and living our Catholic Faith while respecting the faith traditions of others
- † demonstrating the relevance of faith to life and contemporary culture

A Community of Learning:

- † helping students to find and nurture their gifts and talents
- † providing a comprehensive curriculum of quality and challenge for all
- † valuing effort, achievement and excellence in learning
- † respecting competence and dedication in the staff
- † modelling the integration of Catholic Faith and learning
- † using technology to enhance teaching and learning

A Community of Care:

- † welcoming and including students and their families
- † respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each student
- † providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment conducive to learning
- † ensuring fairness and justice within appropriate discipline structures
- † promoting self-esteem and critical thinking in students

A Community of Service:

- † complementing and supporting the role of parents
- † working in partnership with priests and the parish and local communities
- † promoting outreach to the poor and disadvantaged
- † modelling and promoting use of each other's gifts for the benefit of society
- † encouraging an attitude of stewardship to all creation



Diocese of Wagga Wagga
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Building on Strengths

PROVISION OF EQUITY SERVICES
FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS
IN THE DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA

Special needs learners exist within a learning community and as teachers we are there to ensure that they have the best possible opportunities for learning.

Teaching special needs children is no different, in one sense, from quality teaching for all children.

(Lang & Berberich, 1995 : 25)

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BISHOP GERARD HANNA



PREFACE

In the Gospel of Mark (10.13) we are told that Jesus was indignant. The reason: some of the disciples decided that Jesus had no time for children; they began to "shoo" them away when parents were bringing small children to Jesus for Him to touch them. On the occasion, Jesus teaches the disciples a lesson: the humility, the trusting nature and the simple love of children can show us the way to greatness - greatness, that is, in the way Jesus speaks of it.

Children respond to our expectations of them; if we consider a child to be lacking and a low achiever then that expectation will almost certainly be fulfilled. If, however, we recognise a child's strengths and encourage the child to build on those, then there is every likelihood the child's potential will be achieved. Consequently "children and students with disabilities should be encouraged to meet their optimal performance" (p. 24).

In the broader community we are still learning to welcome and value diversity; so too in our classrooms. To address the individual needs of all students - whether they have disabilities or not - is not only a matter of sound educational practice, it is a matter of justice; it is a recognition that these children can show us the way to "greatness" in its scriptural sense.

I commend "Building on Strengths" as a means to promote Equity Services for students with additional needs in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerard Hanna".

+Gerard Hanna
Bishop of Wagga Wagga
30 September, 2003

FOREWORD

Under the Chairmanship of Michael Hopkinson, the Special Needs Reference Group were charged with the task of examining our means of satisfying the learning needs of students whose development was not consistent with the expected learning and development path of mainstream students.

This document contains the outcome of the work of the Reference Group. It is to be read and implemented consistent with the Systemic Schools Vision and Mission Statement. Indeed, it will be read and implemented consistent with the Vision and Mission Statements of each school community.

The related document Today's Children, Tomorrow's Adults interprets our Vision and Mission statements. This document, Building on Strengths unites these statements about our beliefs and practices with education theory and classroom reality.

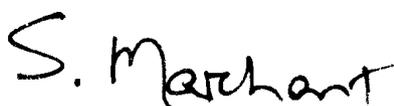
The proclamation of this statement, Building on Strengths, explicitly asks of each of us within our communities that we seek to serve each other according to need and capacity, and that in so doing we continue to create the Kingdom of God on earth in our communities.

We are all - Teachers, Assistants, School Leadership, Clergy, Parents and Students to develop and keep a commitment to peace, justice and fairness as an embodiment of the Spirit in our communities. We are challenged to reach out to those whom we seek to serve, to take on their struggles, their yoke, and to share the load.

In doing so, we enter a shared journey where if we are watchful, we may share the delights of triumph over adversity, of small steps on a long ladder of learning, of experiencing the compassion often extended by those whom we seek to assist.

I sincerely and warmly thank all who contributed to, wrote, reviewed and produced this document. It is a testament which celebrates and enshrines our shared commitments. In authorising use of the document by decision-makers, I pray that the Grace of God be evident and obvious in the decisions which have to be taken. Some will not be easy; some will ask hard things of communities and of individuals. And sometimes, decisions will be taken which demand reflection, discernment, and courage.

Above all remember that we each of us from time to time are the one the Shepherd calls. And at other times, we are the shepherd of a flock for whom we care.'



Stephen Marchant
Director of Schools

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Students With Special Needs Reference Group will inquire into and report on the following:

- establishing and predicting the level of enrolments in the Diocese of students with special needs;
- identifying patterns or prominent categories of students with special needs;
- examining the distribution of students with special needs throughout the system and the consequent need for learning resources and support of those students in particular areas.
- the issues around students with special needs in isolated schools or isolated areas;
- parent expectations of their children and of schools;
- the acquittal requirements being imposed upon us for funding and education service delivery by funding authorities;
- the nature of teacher professional development required in order to work successfully with students with special needs;
- the needs of mainstream students in relation to the integration of students with special needs within main stream classes;
- examination of service delivery models in terms of efficiency and cost;
- the nature of capital works required in order to support students with special needs;
- any wider family or school related issues which arise through participation of students with special needs within our school communities and;
- any other points of reference which may be deemed necessary by the group once it is convened and these points being agreed to by the Director of Schools.



“The Fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse learning needs of their students, accommodating both the different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities, There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school.”
(Salamanca Statement 1994)

MEMBERS OF THE STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REFERENCE GROUP

Michael Hopkinson ~ Chairman
Margaret Schirmer
Cathy Boyton
Nives Clausen
George Galvin
Kathy Gaskin
Kerry Gestier
Cynthia Gunn-Harper
Kate Le Brocque
Stephanie Morrison

and

Amanda Neeves ~ Clerical Support.

The Students With Special Needs Reference Group is indebted to the several hundred parents, teachers, teacher assistants, principals and community members who took the time to provide the input which gave direction and life to this document.

THE UNIQUE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHILDREN

Matthew 18: 1- 4

*At the time the disciples came to Jesus and asked,
"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
He called a little child and had him stand among them.
And He said,
"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*



RATIONALE

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga are committed to providing education in the service of a better world, and to providing our students with reasons for living, hoping and loving. The Special Needs Reference Group was formed to inform and facilitate our commitment to students. Our brief was: to look at current practices; to anticipate future requirements of students with additional needs, and those who work with them; and to assess the impact of these on the services which we provide in our Diocese.

Our work has been guided by the *Diocesan Vision & Mission Statement* (1999) and supported by the principles and practices outlined in *Today's Children, Tomorrow's Adults* (2000), the *Diocesan Literacy Plan* (2000) and a range of documents from the NSW Board Of Studies.

PURPOSE

This document provides a framework for schools and those working with them, to facilitate the effective implementation of services for students with additional needs in our Diocese. It reflects the changing nature of the demands being placed on schools as a result of changes in legislation, improvements in identification, and a growing awareness, at all levels, that children have the right to be placed in inclusive educational settings.

'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.'

Article 3 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this document, the term 'students with special needs' refers to students:

- formally identified as having gifts and/or talents.
- from varying cultural backgrounds.
- formally assessed as having one or a combination of :
 - sensory impairment
 - Intellectual disability
 - physical disability
 - language/communication disability
 - multiple disabilities
 - emotional disabilities
 - behavioural disabilities
 - recognised learning disability
 - health, medical, emotional or behavioural needs

'Inclusive education will succeed if the teacher and the school embrace all the available resources, both human and physical, in the spirit of openness, respect and flexibility'.

(Lang & Berberich 1995:26)

BELIEF STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS

We believe that:

- In order to be faithful to the Gospel values, our educational community endeavours to cater for students and their families regardless of needs.
- Each student has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- Every student has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve their optimum level of learning.
- Students' individual learning needs should be accommodated in the delivery of the curriculum.
- We all have a responsibility to ensure that students are included and are encouraged to learn and develop through relevant, meaningful and enjoyable curriculum activities.
- Education succeeds when parents, teachers and other professionals work in partnership.
- Responsibility for the education of students is shared among parents, schools, the Catholic Schools Office and the community generally.
- Consultation between parents, community providers and educators must occur to determine the most appropriate form of assistance for the student.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

All students have gifts and needs, some greater than others.

The inclusion of all students within our Catholic schools is a challenging concept as the needs of our students are diverse.

Our responsibility as educators is to accept the challenge to reach out and cater for the differences that we encounter by providing an environment that is inclusive and stimulating. We address each child on a case by case basis, providing service appropriate to their need. This ensures equity rather than equal distribution of resources.



*Evidence-based practice, the process through which professionals use the best available evidence, integrated with professional expertise, to make decisions regarding the support of an individual, underpins our efforts for students with additional needs. Evidence based practice requires educators to seek the best evidence from a variety of sources; critically appraise that evidence; decide what outcome is to be achieved; apply that evidence in professional practice; and evaluate the outcome.
(Commonwealth Department of Health & Aged Care, 2000: 59).*

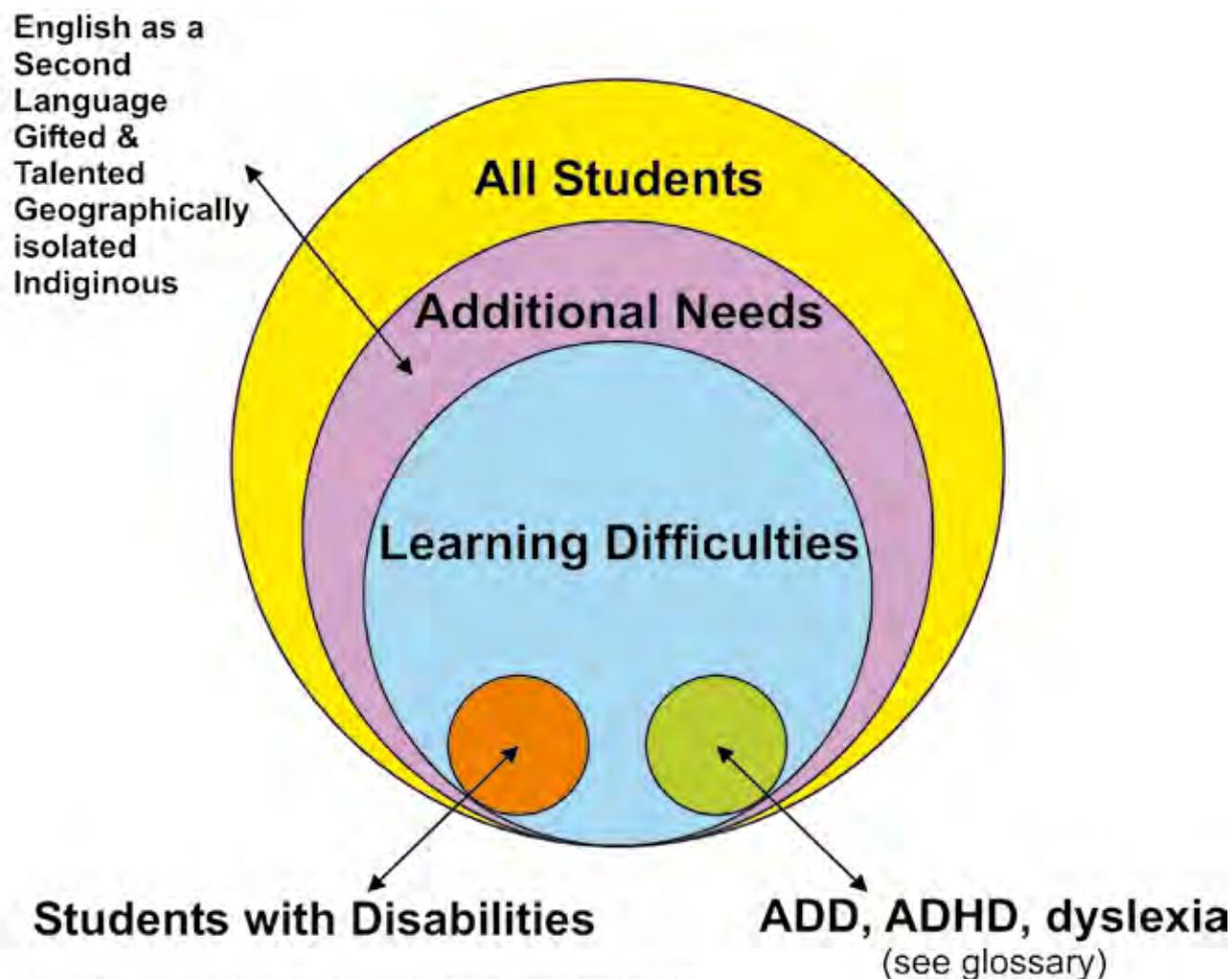
CURRENT PRACTICES

Schools are committed to the early identification of students with additional needs to ensure that appropriate levels of support may be given. Intervention procedures include using the results of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Development (Marie M. Clay 2002) in Kindergarten, Phonemic Awareness Assessment, Basic Skills Tests (B.S.T.) in Years 3 and 5, English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) and Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) in Year 7, to track student progress.

Further formal clinical assessments at the class, school and Catholic Schools Office level are arranged to enhance our knowledge about our students.

Within curriculum frameworks developed by the N.S.W. Board of Studies, we are using an outcomes-based approach with students with additional needs. The formulation of Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.'s) and reporting to parents are also outcomes-based.

'All students can achieve an outcome but at various points along the continuum... Students' achievement on the continuum determines the next learning and teaching decisions. High expectations are held for all learners.' (Spady 1993)



(WfE Ed: an Information Management Program supporting teaching & learning 2000)

BACKGROUND TO THE DOCUMENT

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga is committed to meeting the requirements of students with special needs. To facilitate future effective planning which addresses the needs of these students, a review of current practices was implemented. A Reference Group was formed after expressions of interest were sought from principals, teachers and teacher-assistants.

Surveys were formulated and sent to parents, teachers, teacher assistants and principals to ascertain current levels of need and to identify areas of strength. The surveys included all Diocesan primary schools as well as our Diocesan and independent high schools. The return rate of eighty percent was indicative of respondents' concerns around the education of students with special needs. This document attempts to reflect accurately these responses in order to anticipate and address future needs.

The survey highlighted a number of programs and practices occurring in our schools which are working successfully. These include:

- Reading Recovery program,
- enrichment programs
- employment of teacher assistants,
- implementation of Individual Education Programs
- availability of Deanery based Education Officers to work with teachers.

Fifty one percent of teacher respondents expressed the belief that students with special needs were perceived to be the responsibility of the whole school. Thirty five percent of teachers expressed the view that students with special needs were the sole responsibility of class teachers. The majority of respondents reported that support was forthcoming from Education Officers, Learning Support Centres and school executive staff.

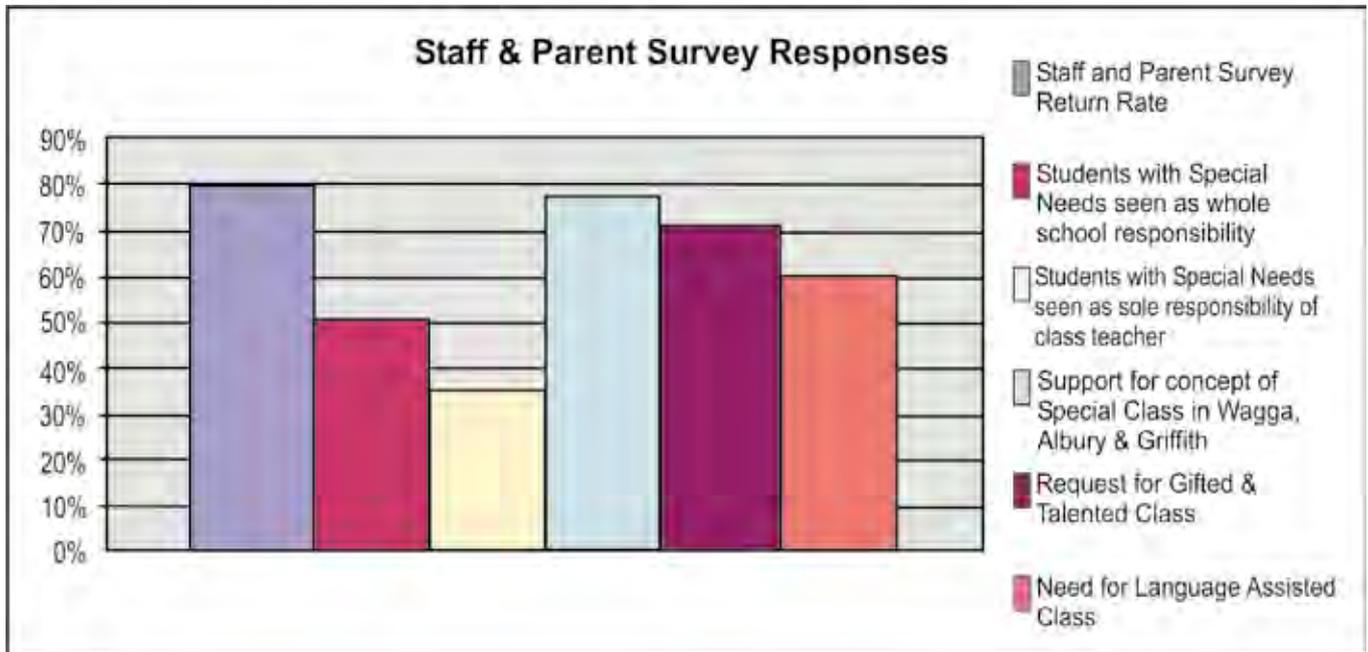
Survey respondents reported the following implications for their classroom management following the inclusion of a student with special needs in their class:

- time required for extra planning and programming
- the need to implement specific programs for students with challenging or disruptive behaviours
- the impact on classroom routine.
- the loss of teaching time, class sizes and access to support.

Seventy seven percent of teacher respondents supported the concept of a special class based in Wagga, Albury and Griffith for students with moderate to severe needs. Seventy one percent supported a gifted and talented/opportunity class, and sixty percent saw the need for language assisted class. Significant numbers of teachers also mentioned the need for more resources.



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The opportunity to foster tolerance and acceptance within our schools was also noted as being a very positive aspect of the inclusion of students with special needs. Respondents felt that it helped to promote a sense of caring and community where all are valued.

A number of parent respondents commented on the dedication of the staff, the supportive nature of schools, and the general needs of their children being effectively met. Eighty percent of teachers indicated a level of satisfaction with the home-school partnership. This satisfaction was also reflected in the parent survey responses.



“Education for a more equitable society is an entitlement of all learners. The different ways society has responded to people with a disability over history needs to be critically examined by all learners. These perceptions can affect people’s lives as well as advantage or disadvantage society as a whole. For example, ‘disability’ is a socially conferred status or construct of the 19th and 20th centuries, rather than a fixed attribute. This has led to the remediation model of disability rather than a positive focus on the abilities that people with a disability contribute to the community in the process of their self-determination.

Understanding and valuing the diverse nature of our individual, social and global capabilities, interests, needs and perspectives and how it impacts on our sense of personal and group identity contributes to our ability to challenge discrimination and inequities. Cooperatively incorporating all people’s capabilities, skills and perspectives in what we do can achieve outcomes to the benefit of all.”

(South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework 2001)

CELEBRATION OF OUR DIOCESAN MISSION

A survey of all who learn and work in our diocesan community showed that our Diocesan Mission Statement is alive in our schools through:



SCHOOLS IN THE WAGGA WAGGA DIOCESE

The Catholic Schools Office currently administers twenty eight primary schools and three high schools. The CSO is in a transition phase as it builds a new Diocesan high school and amalgamates two others. The two remaining non-systemic schools will eventually become part of the CSO structure.

Given the geographical spread of the Diocese, the enrolment profile varies significantly from schools located in larger centres and a number in more isolated areas. This becomes particularly relevant when the school supports students with high level needs.

It also raises a number of issues in terms of accessing those services which enable students to be assessed and supported as needs arise including:

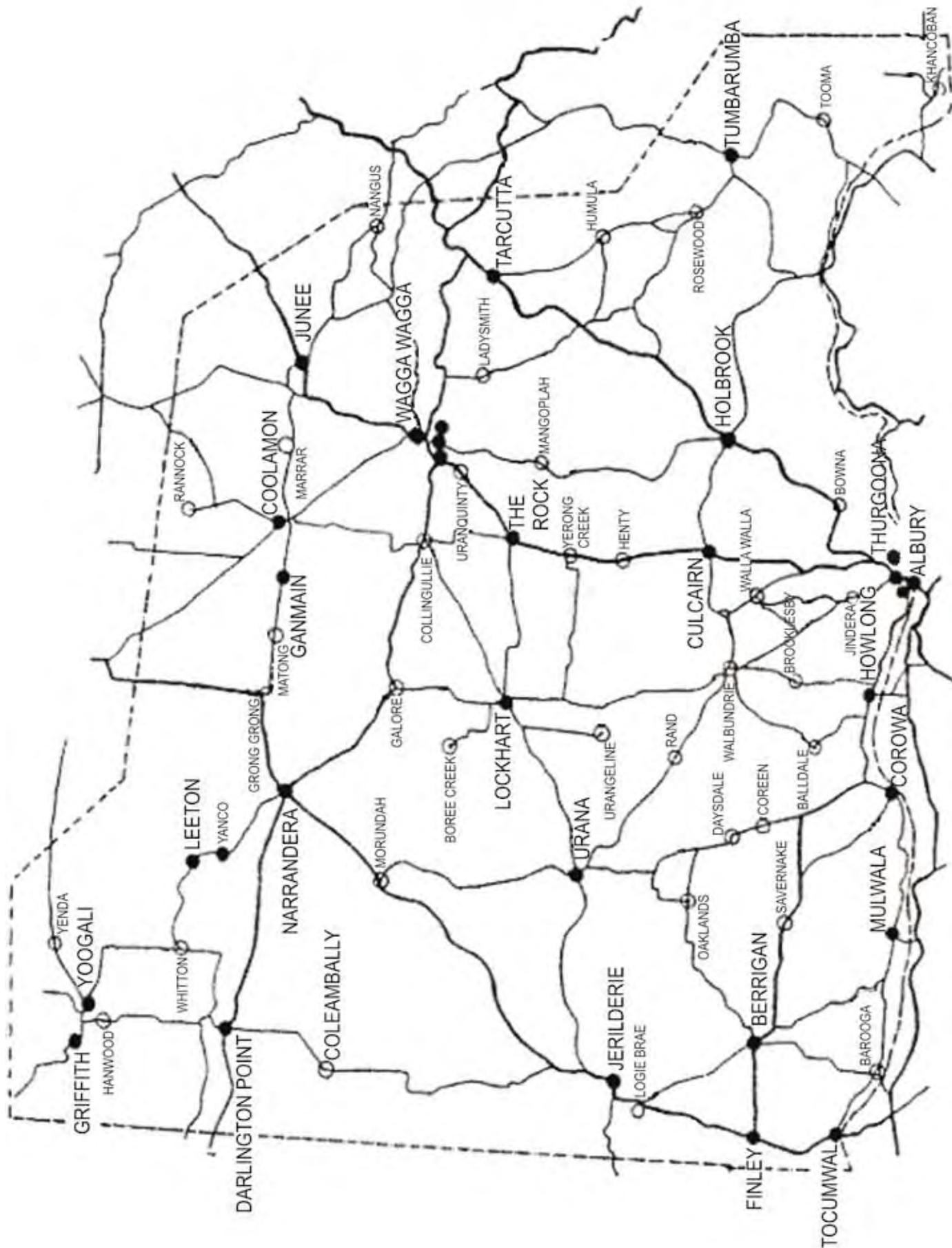
- adequate casual replacement for teacher and teacher assistants
- distances which families have to travel in order to access support services
- visiting therapy services can be spasmodic and unreliable due to high staff turnover which can lead to a lack of continuity of effective standardised services
- cross-sectorial issues which need to be addressed to ensure equitable access to services.
- budget constraints impacting upon the school's ability to provide resources.

The Catholic Schools Office has recognised these as important issues and has sought to address them in the following ways:

1. employment of Education Officers in each Deanery, to support and assist schools, parents and students with additional needs.
2. outsourcing of professional assistance for assessments. Access to these professional services is sourced both through government and private agencies.
3. families being given options to attend appointments in any one of the three main centres of Wagga Wagga, Albury or Griffith. A number of professionals are located in smaller centres and some provide visiting services to the school.



'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.'
Article 26:3 Universal Declaration of Human Rights



The Diocese of Wagga Wagga

INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING PRACTICES

For the purpose of this document it is important that there is an understanding that inclusion means the provision of specially designed supports for students with special needs within our schools to allow them to be full members of their school community and to assist them to participate equitably in the opportunities and responsibilities of the school environment. Schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga welcome students to participate in inclusive classes. The model of inclusion rather than integration is promoted in all school settings.

*‘Love is patient and kind; love never gives up; and faith, hope and patience never fail.’
(1 Cor 13:4,7)*

‘Inclusion is different from integration or mainstreaming. Integration presumes that ‘segregation’ exists and students are without their peers part-time. In reality, students who were integrated part-time were not truly a part of the class and were often involved in activities very different from the other students in the class. Inclusion, a philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community, also means that general education classes are structured to meet the needs of all the students in the class’.

A review of the literature on inclusive school practices revealed that the inclusion of students with additional needs has a very positive impact upon both the school and the class environment. Gospel values such as understanding, support and patience were reported as being engendered in the learning experiences of those who are part of inclusive practices.

‘Numerous studies have examined various aspects of attitudes and relationships resulting from inclusion. Studies by Helmstetter, Peck, and Giangrecco (1994) and Stainback, Stainback Moravcek and Jackson (1992) found that students develop positive attitudes towards students with disabilities based upon the experience of having disabled students in their classroom. Helmstetter, et al (1994) also noted that student friendships and relationships seem to be enhanced by inclusion, with greater understanding and empathy evidenced’.

*‘The fear that inclusion may result in a “watered down’ curriculum for students without disabilities, or that less time will be devoted to learning , is not borne out by the research. None of the studies examining outcomes for students without disabilities has found any negative impact for students who were not identified as having disabilities. Fishbaugh & Gum (1994) found that achievement test data demonstrated consistent academic gains by general education students in inclusive classrooms.’
(Moore & Gilbreath, 2002)*

Experience in working with students with additional needs, combined with ongoing professional development, will assist in bringing about positive educational experiences for all, and a sense of purpose and culture which is truly inclusive.



‘The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour’ (Luke 4: 18-19)

ACCESS OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga respect and value difference. Each school is required to provide suitable access to facilities for students and families of students with additional needs. Schools should also be proactive in recognising potential needs.

Catholic Schools Office staff, in conjunction with relevant school staff, will undertake an access audit of all existing facilities. This audit will inform priorities to enable long term planning for full access to occur. Budget funding for improvements will be determined and allocated at the school and system level. Schools are eligible to apply for Capital Grant funding twice a year.

Schools need to address the following when considering access Issues:

- *access to the school site*
- *access to the curriculum*

Issues related to access to a school site include:

- motorised wheel chair access to all school areas for staff, students, parents and community members with a physical disability.
- disabled toilets
- showering facilities
- change rooms
- bubblers for disabled students
- railings where needed

Issues related to access to the curriculum include:

- assistive technology, e.g. computers, F.M.s, Beam Technology
- sloping desks, adjustable chairs, white boards, stools, blinds
- large print books, print enlargers

Schools should be familiar with the recommendations contained in the Disability Council of N.S.W. document, *“More than getting through the gate – the involvement of parents who have a disability in their children’s school education in N.S.W.”*



RESOURCES

Students with special needs have a right to be fully supported in their attempts to access all areas of the curriculum.

School staff and parents are assisted in their endeavours with students with additional needs through the provision of personnel and resources.

The Catholic Schools Office allocates budgets to provide funding for the acquisition of resources to support learning and teaching. These resources are accessed through the three Learning Support Centres located in Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith and the Resource Centre within McAlroy House in Wagga Wagga.

Teachers, teacher assistants and parents may access resources in the centres in person, by mail, e-mail, phone or fax. On-line access to resources is currently being developed.

Education Officers provide advice, guidance and assistance to those working with students with additional needs. They will suggest resources and equipment which may be borrowed from the Learning Support Centres and McAlroy House.

Information on professional development targetting areas of need for teachers and teacher assistants will be circulated to schools (see handbook).



FUNDING

The Catholic Schools Office is committed to supporting and educating students with additional needs. A small percentage of students with additional needs receive Commonwealth and State funding. However, there are many other students with behavioural, learning, emotional or family circumstances who do not fit into prescribed funding categories. The Diocese of Wagga Wagga sources funds from Diocesan budgets to support non-funded students with additional needs. This amount continues to increase each year as more students are identified. Schools share in this responsibility by using Diocesan funds and resources to meet the needs of non-funded students at the local level.

The graph which follows, from the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), indicates that students with additional needs have been recognised and funded for a variety of disabilities. Despite the inability of current Commonwealth Government funding to meet the increase, the trend towards more enrolments from students with a disability is projected to continue in all schools, including those in our Diocese.

The demand for places for students with additional needs within Catholic schools began to emerge during the early 1980s. Preferred practice in Catholic schools was to integrate these students into regular classrooms wherever possible.

“The fastest growing category of students in Catholic schools from 1985 to 2000 has been those with a disability and this has occurred in every state and territory.”

National Catholic Education Commission, 2001:27 (refer to Chart 1)

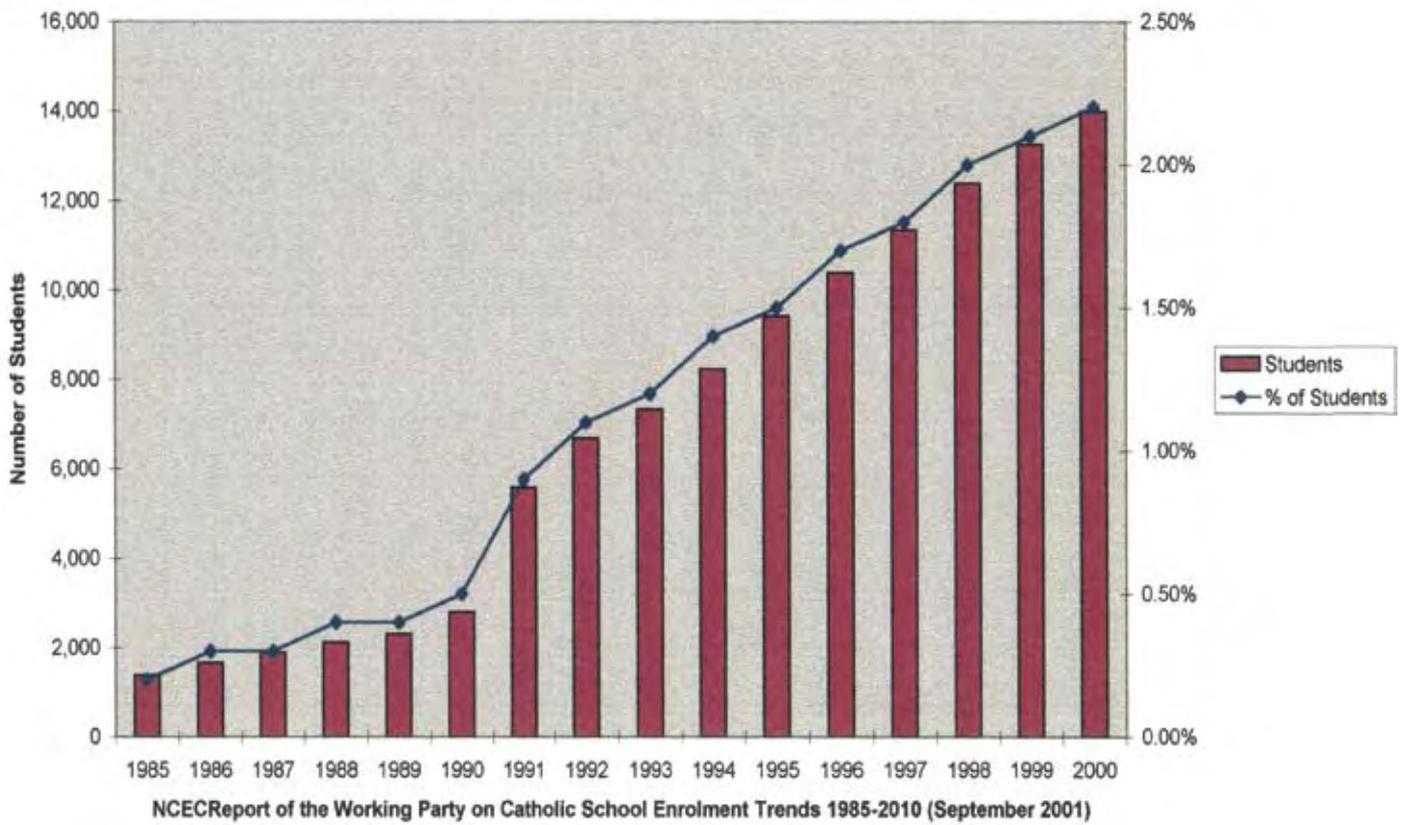
“Funding for children with recognized intellectual, sensory or physical disabilities is provided under State and Commonwealth programs but it is subject to strict eligibility criteria. Most funding programs for children with a disability rely on the diagnosis of a particular condition Children with specific learning difficulties normally do not meet the eligibility criteria for these programs.”

NSW Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, 2002:59

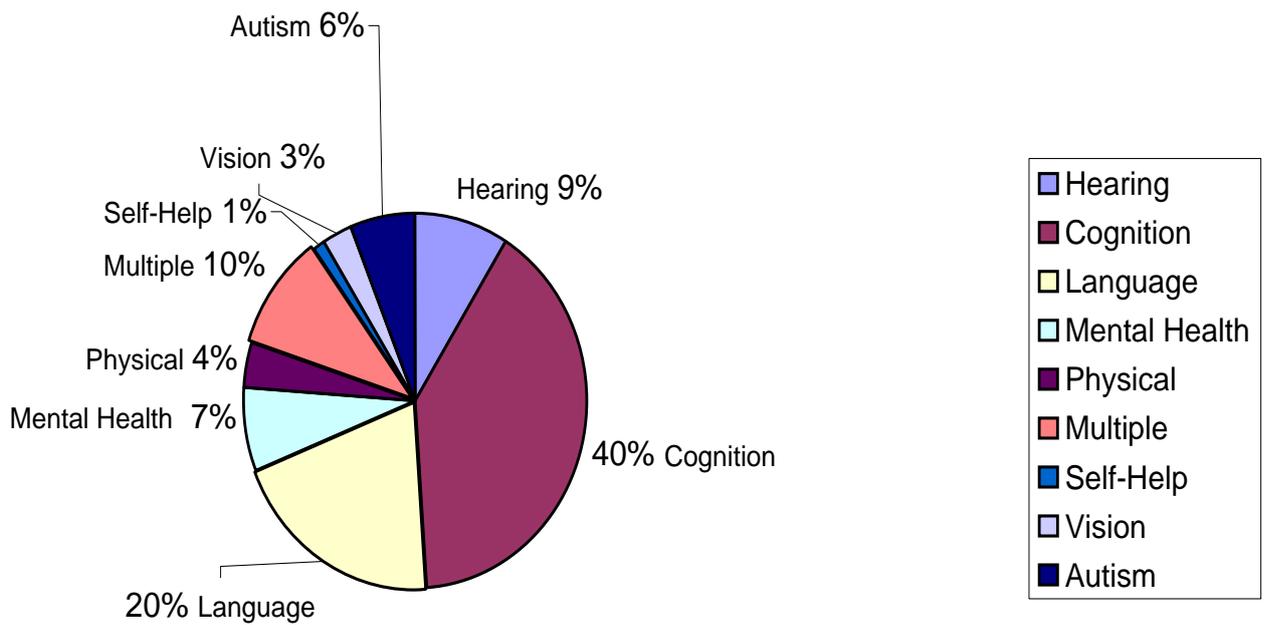
In 2002, two percent of the total enrolment in Diocesan schools included funded students with disabilities. The Diocese of Wagga Wagga committed 2.5% of its total education budget to address the needs of these students.



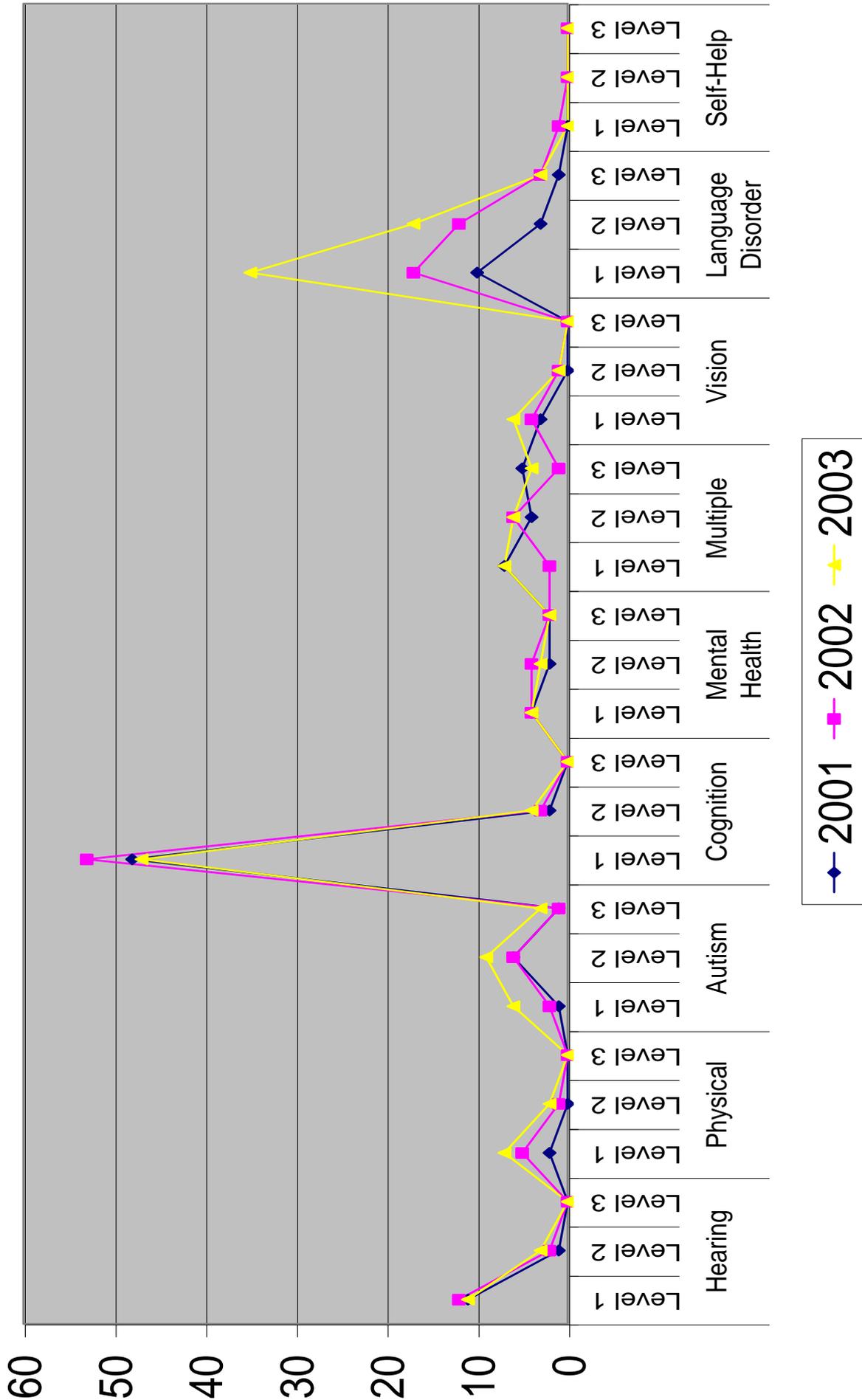
SWD Students - Number of SWD students in Catholic Schools and percentage of students identified as SWD in Catholic Schools, Australia 1985 - 2000



Diocese of Wagga Wagga Students With Disabilities 2002 by Categories



Number of students with Disabilities Diocese of Wagga Wagga



EXPECTATIONS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

The Catholic Schools Office in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga is required to:

- actively promote the Vision and Mission Statement of the Diocese.
- work towards effective and inclusive schooling practices for all students.
- foster a supportive environment for staff, parents and students.
- facilitate the co-ordination of human and material resources for the support of all students with additional needs in accordance with System Guidelines.
- engage in decision and policy making relevant to students with additional needs.
- promote positive responses to all legislation relating to students and teachers in educational settings.
- provide and promote relevant professional development to support inclusive schooling practices.



*Children and students with disabilities should be expected and encouraged to meet their optimal performance. To do this implies that their life experiences are challenging and fulfilling and their education involves up-to-date teaching and expertise.
(South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, 2001)*

EXPECTATIONS OF EDUCATION OFFICERS

When a student is identified as needing additional assistance Education Officers are required to provide assistance in areas such as:

- co-ordinating the provision of relevant professional development programs for school staff and families.
- assessment of students and referral to external agencies.
- co-ordination of systemic and other agency services to students with additional needs.
- support for staff, parents and children from pre-school through to continuing education/post schooling options.
- implementing programs for students with additional needs.
- involvement in Individual Education Programs.
- accountability of service levels to meet system, state and federal acquittal requirements.
- co-ordination of student funding applications.
- resourcing based on need.



EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL

When a student is identified as needing additional assistance, the principals in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga are required to:

- be open and welcoming to families who seek to enrol their child or teenager with additional needs.
- support all staff members in their endeavours to provide for students with additional needs.
- actively promote positive and informed attitudes towards students with additional needs.
- implement the Diocesan Ascertainment Process and ensure that all stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities.
- consult with the Catholic Schools Office, school staff and Education Officers, to develop a school policy and school management plan, in accordance with Diocesan guidelines, which outlines procedures and support for students with additional needs.
- liaise with relevant service providers both prior to and after enrolment.
- provide regular and ongoing communication with relevant stakeholders.
- consult parents and teachers in matters relevant to the student with additional needs.
- monitor and provide for the development of teaching and learning programs for students with additional needs to ensure their effectiveness.
- attend Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings where possible.
- provide opportunities for appropriate professional development for their staff working with students with additional needs.
- place students in the most appropriate learning environment following careful consultation and consideration.
- ensure that the I.E.P. process occurs in each classroom to meet legal requirements in the school (refer to Diocesan Handbook).
- ensure legal compliance in all matters regarding students with special needs e.g. I.E.P.s, disclosure of diagnostic information etc.
- supervise the legitimate use of resources including the role of In-School Special Needs Co-ordinator.

*Schooling should be socially just, so that:
the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students
improve and, over time, match those of other students.
(The Adelaide declaration on national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century, 1999)*

EXPECTATIONS OF THE IN-SCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATOR – PRIMARY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER – SECONDARY

Each school in the Diocese is entitled to an In-School Special Needs Co-ordinator as mandated in the Diocesan Handbook. These co-ordinators are required to:

- liaise between relevant authorities to ensure that effective implementation of programs for students with additional needs takes place.
- organise services for students with additional needs including Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) meetings.
- ensure that all funded students have Individual Education Plans and that these are monitored.
- distribute resources and information as required.
- initiate formal assessment following in-class identification of students with additional needs.
- assist class teachers to analyse assessment results.
- co-ordinate the implementation of recommendations from inter-agency reports.
- raise the level of awareness among staff about issues relating to the inclusion of students with additional needs.
- create opportunities to raise the profile of students with additional needs within the school.
- facilitate the writing process for funding applications and submissions.
- promote awareness of strategies to assist students who do not qualify for funding.
- be familiar with, and promote the use of the Diocesan Special Needs Handbook.



EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS

The challenge for teachers of students with additional needs is to attempt to address their students' needs within an inclusive environment. Teachers need to be aware of appropriate practices to achieve outcomes for students with special needs.

The following effective teaching and learning practices from *Today's Children, Tomorrow's Adults* will assist teachers in their planning. All teachers are required to:

- Gather as much student information as possible.
- Find out what students already know and can do.
- Help students actively develop understanding.
- Provide varied learning experiences, strategies and resources to meet diverse needs.
- Connect new learning to students' lives.
- Focus learning on important questions, concepts and processes.
- Make purposes and goals explicit.
- Help students apply/transfer learning to new situations.
- Regularly engage learners in meaningful dialogue with peers.
- Teach non-verbal forms of communication.
- Provide for multiple ways to represent thinking processes, ideas and information.
- Help students use styles appropriate for different audiences, purposes and contexts.
- Use collaborative structures in a purposeful way.
- Involve the broader community beyond the classroom.
- Use language that actively encourages self-responsibility.
- Model and make explicit creative, critical and problem solving skills and processes.
- Help students select and use a wide range of learning, how-to-learn and thinking tools, techniques and processes.
- Invite student negotiation and choice in learning.
- Help students learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Build unity and a sense of belonging in the classroom.
- Help students to appreciate and value diversity.
- Co-create with students, class norms based on agreed values.
- Offer opportunities for students to work in the service of others - to show care and make a contribution within and beyond the school.

In the case of students with identified support needs, teachers will need to plan and implement an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to achieve desired outcomes, attend support group meetings, where appropriate, and encourage open and frequent communication with relevant collaborating partners.



EXPECTATIONS OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHER ASSISTANT

The Special Needs Teacher Assistant supports the classroom teacher, enabling students with additional needs to be included in the classroom and to experience success in their school environment.

The Special Needs Teacher Assistant is required to:

- work in partnership with the classroom teacher.
- develop an awareness of the student's needs in order to inform and achieve the goals of the student's Individualised Education Plan.
- build relationships with the student, the student's family and others in the learning environment.
- implement individualised learning programs devised by the classroom teacher.
- facilitate the student's growth towards independence in the school community.
- provide feedback on the progress of the student to teachers.

The Special Needs Teacher Assistant, in partnership with the student's teacher:

- participates in Individual Education Plan meetings,
- provides assistance according to the student's requirements,
- implements programs from other professionals in order to meet the needs of the student,
- keeps records in accordance with Diocesan policy,
- prepares resources to assist the student with additional needs to learn in an age-appropriate and educational manner,
- completes the range of tasks assigned to the role,
- attends relevant professional development.



Classrooms that successfully include students with disabilities are designed to welcome diversity and to address the individual needs of all students, whether they have disabilities or not. (Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms, 1993)

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

*“Parents and teachers share a tremendous and wonderful responsibility. Together they give children the desire to learn and work hard. Good communication between parents and teachers is essential to the success of their efforts.”
(Hand in Hand 2000 : 1)*

Parents of students with additional needs are invited to work in partnership with the school. They can expect a welcoming atmosphere and interaction with staff who seek to address the needs of their child.

Parents have a right to ask a school what they can offer to assist in meeting particular needs. Parents should be encouraged to ascertain the level of support which may be provided for their child. There needs to be honest and open dialogue which fosters a mutual understanding around each student. Parents should be offered choices and information that enhances their level of understanding rather than being seen as passive partners.

Parents are respected as their child’s first teachers and the keepers of critical information about them. Parents have a right to full participation in the formulation of their child’s I.E.P. and to be involved in all review processes. A meeting each term will be held to monitor and formally evaluate program outcomes.

Parents of students with additional needs should be invited to support the school in ways that enhance their child’s development and level of progress. Parental right to disclosure of information about their child is paramount.

Schools which promote inclusive practices:

- Create partnerships which are positive and proactive
- Encourage the parents’ sharing of explicit information upon enrolment to empower the student’s learning possibilities.
- Respect the parents’ roles and understand grief in parents.
- Encourage meaningful parent / whole family participation
- Invest time in planning for classroom volunteers
- Use a variety of parent involvement activities to cater for diverse family circumstances
- Allow families to choose the ways in which they wish to be involved
- Consult with families about mutual expectations
- Stay in close contact with parents and care givers
- Demonstrate patience, sensitivity and tact
- Value reciprocal trust and confidentiality
- Show their appreciation to those who involve themselves in classrooms
- Outsource assistance when required
- Establish and promote supportive networks and programs

These practices enhance the learning environment of all students.



STUDENT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

“Assessment involves teachers in identifying gathering and interpreting information about the learning achievements of their students. Assessment assists teachers to set the direction for ongoing teaching and learning. It allows teachers and schools to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs and to plan to meet the individual learning needs of all students within the context of those programs. Balanced comprehensive and varied assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle.”
 Commonwealth Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs 2000:5

Functional Assessment:

Assessment tasks assist teachers to:

- Identify what students know, understand and can do in relation to curriculum outcomes.
- Identify how students interact socially.
- Identify which students may require additional support in order to achieve outcomes.

ASSESSMENT RESPONSE (Primary K- 6)

Assessment results may indicate that a student is experiencing difficulty. The class teacher adapts teaching practice with ongoing monitoring. This may be done after preliminary screening and teacher reflection in consultation with peers, executive, principal, parents, school based special needs coordinator and /or other agencies. e.g speech therapist.

ASSESSMENT RESPONSE (Secondary 7-12)

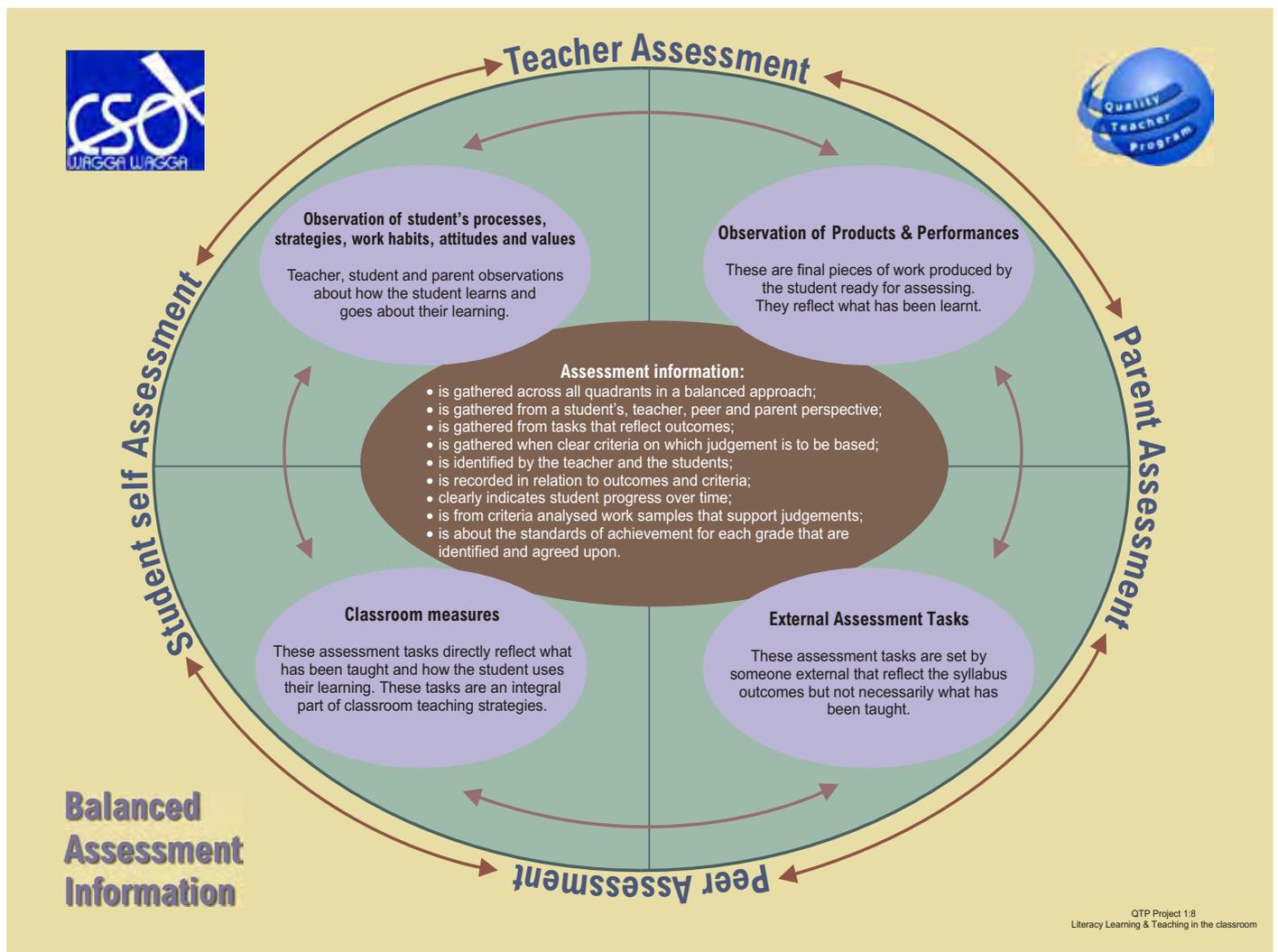
If a student appears not to be achieving at their appropriate stage level, the class teacher contacts the school Special Needs Co-ordinator who will assist with initial screening of the student.

The Special Needs Co-ordinator will work with colleagues and the Education Officer to determine what is required to best assist the student, prior to advising relevant teachers of the adaptations and provisions which need to be put in place to improve the learning environment for the student.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

If results indicate that the student is now working at the appropriate stage level, a school-based decision should be made as to whether further adaptation of the program and teacher practice is necessary, in conjunction with the deanery Education Officer. If concerns persist, the In-school Co-ordinator will refer the student on for further assessment.





TRANSITION PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS IN DIOCESAN SCHOOLS K - 12

Schools will be aware that their enrolled students have a range of needs. A transition plan catering for these diverse needs should be in place prior to the commencement of a high support needs enrolment (see Handbook). Schools must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate and respond to, changes in circumstances and emerging needs amongst their student cohort.

The school management plan is devised to ensure the best possible placement for the student. It should ensure that the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders are addressed. Plans will address occupational health and safety issues, duty of care, behaviour management strategies and ensure the welfare of all students and staff. They should be devised and implemented in partnership with staff, and ideally include parents/caregivers and Education Officers from the Catholic Schools Office (if appropriate). Management plans need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that needs and expectations are continually aligned.

Plans should address the tracking of students with additional needs to ensure a smooth transition from:

Pre-school to School
Class to Class
School to School
School to Post-School programs

Transition is facilitated through:

- The sharing and exchange of information between stakeholders,
- The maintenance of cordial working relationships with staff in external agencies



“Care must be taken to ensure that a process approach as an example of inclusive practice is not simply a soft option which allows students with disabilities and learning difficulties to fade into the background without being unduly challenged and without really making progress through the curriculum. To be effective, inclusion should result in much more than simply minor gains in social development”

Westwood, 2001 : 7

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agencies – External organisations which provide support and/or assistance e.g. Ageing & Disability Services, Community health etc.

Assessment – Involves teachers and other professionals identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the learning environments of students.

Basic Skills Test (B.S.T.) – Basic Skills Tests administered to students in Years Three and Five in Literacy & Numeracy

CSO - Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

Diocesan Ascertainment Process – Guidelines explaining the processes for enrolment of students with additional needs in schools within the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

Diocesan Literacy Plan – Diocesan document launched in 1999 to guide literacy practices in schools.

Education Officers – Staff employed by the Catholic Schools office to work with schools in each Deanery, supporting students with additional needs.

ELLA – English Language and Literacy Assessment for students in Year Seven.

Gifted &/or Talented – Students who have been formally identified as possessing abilities and/or IQ which is 'above average'.

In-School Special Needs Co-ordinator – Liaison person located in each school to assist with students with additional needs.

I.E.P/ITP– Individual Education/Transition Program/Plan written by classroom teachers and Student Support Team for program implementation.

NSW Board of Studies – State Government body that determines syllabus for all schools in each of the Key Learning Areas.

Observation Survey – Assessment process administered in Kindergarten/ Year 1 to determine literacy knowledge and skill/levels.

OWLS – Oral & Written Language Scales – Assessment for Receptive & Expressive language.

Partnership – an association intended to achieve a common aim.

Peabody – Receptive language screening assessment.

Phonemic Awareness Assessment – Early Literacy Diagnostic assessment tool.

Referral – Sending to another source for further assessment and reports from people such as psychologists, and speech pathologists.

School Management Plan - Developed by a school for the purpose of detailing protocols and procedures relating to students with additional needs enrolled at the school.

School Renewal Framework – Diocesan plan to guide school practices and procedures.

SNAP – Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program for students in Year Seven.

Stakeholders – ‘The different groups that are affected by decisions, consultations, and policies’.
(Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1998: 259)

Student Funding Applications – Documentation which is completed in order for funding to be allocated for students with additional needs.

Students With A Disability – students who are recognised in accordance with funding guidelines in the following areas: intellectual, sensory, social/emotional, language or multiple disability.

Today’s Children Tomorrow’s Adults – Diocesan document launched in 2000 to guide learning & teaching principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From 2002, each school will appoint an in-school coordinator (with time release). This role will include the identification of, and overseeing of, students with additional needs within each school. Education Officers – Learning and Teaching will train co-ordinators and liaise with them as necessary. In-school co-ordinators will be offered an opportunity to gain further qualifications in Special Education.

Commencing 2002, Diocesan Ascertainment Process Guidelines to be implemented in all schools (see Handbook).

During 2003, the option of contracting health care specialists such as Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Behaviour Specialists and Educational Psychologists to be explored with a view to streamlining and co-ordinating services and reports for accountability purposes. This may include the running of Professional Development days, attending parent meetings and in-school support visits.

From 2002, the annual induction of teachers new to the Diocese to include information related to students with additional needs.

From 2002, continuous professional development to be provided for Teacher Assistants.

Commencing 2002, a transition program for students moving from one educational context to another, e.g., from pre-school to school, will be explored.

Continuing in 2004, ongoing inservicing for in-school special needs co-ordinators.

Commencing 2004, guidelines for Gifted and Talented students to be developed by Education Officers – Learning and Teaching and interested teachers.

Commencing 2003, profiles for each of the Learning Support Centres to be upgraded. A list of their resources to be available to schools, initially in print form, and ultimately electronically, following completion of the current development and trial period.

During 2003, a feasibility study as part of the School Renewal Framework, to be undertaken to examine Student Enrichment Days to be run at Wagga, Albury and Griffith for students with additional needs in areas such as Maths, Literature, Art, and Music.

During 2004, expressions of interest to be sought from Diocesan school teachers wishing to train in behaviour management strategies.

During 2003, Education Officers, to prepare an information booklet to be distributed through the schools outlining Diocesan procedures related to students with additional needs.

From 2004, schools to be encouraged to consider a budget allocation for resources for students with additional needs.

From 2003, each school to be provided with a range of resources that will include school based assessment material. An assessment/ learning checklist to assist with the identification of students with additional needs to be formulated to allow schools to quickly and effectively assess students with additional needs.

Commencing 2003, schools to be provided with an up to date list of contacts for further services

available for students with additional needs e.g Speech Pathologists, Community Health, DOCS etc. This information will be updated on the Catholic Schools Office Portal and in the Handbook.

During 2004, each school to devise and implement a management plan to address the needs of students with additional needs.

From 2004, Diocesan incentives to upgrade qualifications in Special Education through scholarships to be offered. (Criteria to be established.)

From 2002 Professional Development opportunities to be provided for staff working with students with additional needs. The areas planned for targeting include:

- Modification of programs, especially Individual Education Programs, & analysing assessments and reports from specialists
- Interpreting results from Basic Skills Tests, English Language and Literacy Assessments and the Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program, and ways of implementing best teaching practice related to these results
- Differentiating the curriculum for mixed ability classes
- Upon school entry use of assessment data such as Observation Survey, KAT Kit, Cap, Phonemic Awareness Program, Hawaii Early Screener, BOEHM, and Orchid for Stages 3, 4 & 5.



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Building on Strengths