



Inclusive practices in Catholic schools in Queensland

A position statement of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Introduction

Catholic schools share a role in preaching the Good News *“I have come that you may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).*

Queensland Catholic schools have a strong commitment to social inclusion and student wellbeing, catering for students with a diverse range of personal characteristics and experiences. These characteristics and experiences may be attributable to physical, religious, cultural, personal health or wellbeing, intellectual, psychological, socio-economic or life experiences. This diverse range of personal characteristics and experiences enriches the communal life of schools.

Definition

For the purpose of this position statement the term ‘inclusive practices’ is defined as the provision of a safe, supportive and disciplined learning environment responsive to the needs of all students in order for them to have equitable and genuine opportunities for engagement with the curriculum, demonstrate their knowledge and strengths, and maximise participation and opportunities for learning.

Rationale

Queensland Catholic Education Commission believes that the principles of inclusion are predicated on the intention to provide an educational environment that promotes the human dignity of each student within a supportive Christian community. The principles of inclusion recognise:

- the uniqueness and the diversity of students as children of God
- the need for belonging within a community
- a whole school approach to planning, curriculum development and school organisation
- access to reasonable differentiated resources and learning opportunities to facilitate the participation of students
- Catholic social teaching and practice that is informed by legislative requirements, educational philosophy and societal expectations.

‘Teachers are called upon to rise up to a major educational challenge, which is the recognition, respect and enhancement of diversity. Psychological, social, cultural and religious diversity should not be denied, but rather considered as an opportunity and a gift.’

(Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion, 2014: II.5)

Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that Catholic school authorities commit to establishing policies and procedures that incorporate inclusive practices that are supportive of Church teaching and fundamental to the ethos of Catholic schools to meet the diverse needs of students.

Implications

Catholic schooling authorities and schools in Queensland will give consideration to:

- enrolment applications from families “*who identify with and seek the values of Christ*” (Catholic Schools for the 21st Century, 2001) in accordance with diocesan and school enrolment policy
- developing enrolment policies and procedures that promote inclusion
- having enrolment processes which identify the student’s specific needs, adjustments required, whether adjustments are reasonable and can be made without creating unjustifiable hardship for any party
- building strong partnerships with students, families and educators to engage in collaborative planning and decision making
- seeking to develop collaborative partnerships and service agreements with agencies beyond the school and the school authority to support the particular needs of students when and where appropriate
- providing opportunities for professional development of staff to support the participation of students with diverse learning needs
- providing flexible system approaches, school structures, procedures and curriculum to facilitate options and pathways for students
- creating physical environments that are accessible, stimulating, safe and welcoming
- supporting and assisting students and their families to discern appropriate educational arrangements, particularly in times of transition

References

Congregation for Catholic Education. (2014). *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*. Retrieved July 15, 2014, from

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The Bishops of Queensland. (2001). *The Queensland Bishops Project – Catholic Schools for the 21st Century*. Queensland Catholic Education Commission.

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