

## Inclusive School Practices Toolkit

# Context of a Good Life – Personhood and Citizenhood

This tool has been developed as part of the *Inclusive School Communities* project. The project is facilitated by JFA Purple Orange.

### Introduction: Why this tool

This tool is an overview of the *Model of Citizenhood Support 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (the Model)<sup>1</sup>; a framework for advancing people's life chances and moving people into good, valued lives.

This tool has been developed because the *Model of Citizenhood Support* is relevant to educators and school staff working with young people who may be at risk of being excluded because of their circumstances.

An understanding of the Model and intentionally embedding its components in education settings can increase the assets and opportunities available to young people living with increased vulnerability.

### Ideas and Action

#### *Ideas*

The Model of Citizenhood Support contemplates how best to support person living with increased vulnerability.

In this context, vulnerability is defined as the presence of circumstances that can adversely impact on the person's capacity to build their own lives and take up valued roles in the community and economy. Examples of circumstances that can increase a person's vulnerability are disability, older age, poverty, homelessness, cultural and/or geographic dislocation, and loneliness.

The Model is based on the belief that every person seeks to build a good life for themselves. The Model is a helpful way to understand the assets and opportunities available to a person, particularly those with increased vulnerability. It has been designed for use by formal

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, R. (2013), *Model of Citizenhood Support 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, [http://www.valuesinaction.org.au/application/files/7614/7253/8281/Model\\_of\\_Citizenhood\\_Support\\_2nd\\_Edition\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.valuesinaction.org.au/application/files/7614/7253/8281/Model_of_Citizenhood_Support_2nd_Edition_FINAL.pdf)

agencies and agents who provide support to people living with increased vulnerability, to find their way to genuinely helpful practices. The audience includes schools and educators.

As set out in the Model, a good life is characterised by the presence of:

- **Personhood** - Having authorship of an individual's own life
- **Citizenhood** - Having valued roles in community life and the economy

Citizenhood reflects a situation where a person:

- leads an active and fulfilling lifestyle
- exercises choice and control over how they live
- contributes and grows through their involvement in meaningful activities
- participates in a network of relationships characterised by acceptance, belonging and love

Unlike *citizenship*, *Citizenhood* is a dynamic experience; it can rise and fall depending on the person's circumstances. For example, a person who becomes unwell because of a bug may have to take some time off work, may have to miss a social event with friends, etc. in these ways, the bug causes a temporary dip in the person's Citizenhood. However, once the bug has passed the person can reconnect into these roles.

A bigger adverse impact on a person's Citizenhood can come from becoming unemployed for a long period of time, which impacts on all aspects of a person's life, economically, socially, and in terms of self-esteem and outlook.

In a school setting, an experience that can have an adverse impact on a student's Citizenhood is bullying. Through its various forms, bullying can have an adverse impact on the student's relationships, resources and self-belief. When bullying is sustained, it can lead to a bullied student feeling a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and uselessness, which can have dramatic consequences.

While a 'zero tolerance' to bullying may be sufficient to minimise the above risk to most students, there will likely be some students where that approach will not be enough to ensure that the student is a valued member of the student community, valued for who they

are and having a network of friends. This will be true for at least some students living with increased vulnerability due to disability, cultural dislocation, trauma, etc.

In these circumstances the school can think about what types of investment might best support that student into Citizenship, as a valued member of an inclusive school community.

To assist this, the Model asserts there are four main ways a school can increase a student's chances of moving into Citizenship. These are termed the Four Capitals, and comprise:

- ***Personal Capital – how the person sees themselves***  
in a school context, this goes to how a school supports a student to believe in themselves, to easily see their own innate value as a human being, to acknowledge their own strengths and gifts, to see their own potential to grow. For the student living with disability, or other type of increased vulnerability, they may already have had a range of life experiences that have harmed their Personal Capital. This then demands a higher level of mindfulness from educators;
- ***Knowledge Capital – what the person knows and can apply***  
this is the traditional business of education; supporting a student to grow their knowledge and skills so that they can take up their rightful place as a valued contributing member of community life. For the student living with disability, this goes to how the school adapts the curriculum and pedagogy to provide the best chance of the student connecting to the knowledge and skills
- ***Material Capital – money and the tangible things in the person's life***  
This goes to the resources that are available to the student. For all students this includes things like lunch, books, classrooms, IT, etc that assist students to grow their life chances through the learning process. For a student living with disability, this includes the presence of accessibility features such as mobility supports, ramps, rails, lifts, easy English versions of text, audio description, assistive technology, support staff, etc
- ***Social Capital –people in the person's life***  
this goes to the heart of an inclusive school community, where every student feels

they genuinely belong to that community and have friends and acquaintances across the school years and also authentic nurturing relationships with educators. For the student living with disability or other type of increased vulnerability, this includes a highly intentional approach to building a student's connectivity to their peers, on the basis of common interest and shared belonging.

### **Actions**

The Citizenhood framework can assist an educator to think through how best to assist student to be a successful valued member of the school community.

First, the educator can consider the extent to which the student has valued roles at the school. For example:

- ***Reflection #1: what roles does the student have at school that raise their value in the eyes of others in the school community?***

If their only role is seen to be that of a partially-attending, disruptive or inattentive student, this does not constitute a robust Citizenhood profile. The nature of that student's vulnerability may mean it is difficult to expect the student to resolve more roles of Citizenhood by themselves. So the challenge for the educator is how to find ways to move this student into roles at the school that mean they are valued in the eyes of other people at school.

- ***Reflection #2: to what extent are the student's strengths and gifts known and does the student have very positive sense of their own worth and potential?***

The challenge for the educator here is to find ways to reveal the students inherent gifts and strengths, and to communicate these to the student and to other stakeholders. This can help the student to see their worth and potential beyond their vulnerability. Other stakeholders at the school, including educators and students, can contribute to this narrative

- ***Reflection #3: to what extent is the classroom experience tailored to the student's particular learning preferences?***

This goes to the educator's skills and confidence in designing and delivering a successful learning experience to the student as a member of a diverse classroom

- **Reflection #4: to what extent is the student resourced and support their learning and membership of the school community**

This involves consideration of what types of material resources might best support the student to be present, to learn, and to be a valued member of the school community. For some students this might start and end with reliable access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch, while for other students it might involve the availability for example of assistive technology.

- **Reflection #5: to what extent does the students have friendships at the school?**

At all stages of life, loneliness can be highly disabling. For all the attention that might be placed on how to deliver a successful learning experience in the classroom for a student living with increased vulnerability, those arrangements don't guarantee that the students will move into natural and authentic social networks with other students at the school. For a student who has very low social connections at school, the educator can consider ways to systematically build the chances of social relationships emerging. This could include identifying interests that other students at the school might have in common with the target student, and then training a way to bring those students together through that common interest. It can also involve techniques like circles of support/circles of friends

The above five reflections offer a framework for an educator to begin thinking about how best to shape the school's efforts to a student living with increased vulnerability into Citizenhood at the School.

It can also serve as the basis for a group of educators to come together to find solutions on behalf of the student.

## Where to go for more information

The best starting point is to go to the Citizenhood publication:

Williams, R (2013) *Model of Citizenhood Support (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)* Julia Farr Association, Adelaide (PDF copies available at no charge via [admin@purpleorange.org.au](mailto:admin@purpleorange.org.au))

You can watch a short video about it on the JFA Purple Orange website here:

<https://www.purpleorange.org.au/why-it-matters>

Because Citizenship is anchored on the idea of people taking up valued roles in their lives, it is also worth looking at the body of work called Social Role Valorisation (SRV), perhaps starting here:

<https://socialrolevalorization.com/srv-theory/>