Inclusive School Practices Toolkit

Catalogue of Professional Learning for School Staff on Inclusive Practices and Disability

This tool has been developed as part of the *Inclusive School Communities Project*, funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency. The project is led by JFA Purple Orange.

## Introduction

We know how important it is for school staff to be well-informed, have opportunities to grow professionally, and have resources to assist their work. One of the ways for school staff to access information and build professional capacity is by engaging in professional learning (PL) relevant to their current role and professional development goals. Inclusive education is a topic to stay up to speed on however this area is continually growing, and it can be difficult and time-consuming to find good information and training. Educators who participate in PL about inclusive practices will be more willing and better equipped for working with students who have additional learning needs and will be more confident to plan and implement adjustments and support.

We have prepared a catalogue of PL for South Australian schools on inclusive school practices and disability. This is a starting point for schools to explore and engage with training relevant to supporting inclusive school communities. We hope the catalogue makes it easier for education professionals to choose where best to spend their time on learning and accessing good information on this topic. This tool provides information about the catalogue including how it is organized and how it can be used by schools.

## Ideas

An issue raised by young people living with disability and their families in various consultations run by JFA Purple Orange is a lack of awareness and understanding about disability and inclusion in schools. A parent described a meeting at her child’s new school with the principal and a teacher before the child started; the teacher stated “’I’m not a special education teacher and I don’t want to be. So, I’m not sure how your daughter’s going to manage in my class.” Unfortunately, experiences like these are not uncommon and point to the bigger problem of educator’s capacity to teach classes with diverse abilities and needs. The international report on the results of the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018) released last year reported that only 38 per cent of teachers in Australia felt “well prepared” or “very well prepared” for teaching in a mixed-ability setting; this is 6 percentage points lower than the OECD average.[[1]](#footnote-1) Interestingly, the TALIS 2018 report revealed only 58 per cent of teachers in Australia had “teaching students with special needs” included in their recent professional development activities.[[2]](#footnote-2) Teachers in general need to feel more confident in their skills in teaching to a diverse classroom.[[3]](#footnote-3) Of the parents consulted by JFA Purple Orange to inform previous education submissions, 95 per cent recommended disability inclusion training for teachers so they are better prepared to include a child living with disability in the classroom. A participant in surveys of young people living with disability and their parents and supporters adeptly proposed “More information given to educators about studies that have shown the benefits of inclusion. All teachers at a school need some insight as there will be contact with the child in the yard, and questions by other students.”

An ingredient for creating an inclusive school community is ensuring school staff are equipped for engaging with students from various backgrounds and who have diverse abilities and needs. Pre-service teacher education as well as in-service teacher education needs to include content on teaching to a diverse classroom, modifying the curriculum to a range of abilities, information about specific disabilities and disability types, and inclusive classroom practices.

## *How the Catalogue is Organized*

The catalogue is online on the Inclusive School Communities website https://inclusiveschoolcommunities.org.au/resources/catalogue-professional-development. It contains PL for school staff in SA relevant to inclusive practices and working with students living with disability. We have researched widely and catalogued workshops/webinars/lectures from the following SA organisations:

* Autism SA https://www.autismsa.org.au/
* Inclusive Education Planning https://inclusiveeducationplanning.com.au
* Learning 4 All http://www.learning4all.com.au/index.php
* Novita https://www.novita.org.au/
* Special Education Resource Unit http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/
* The Growing Space https://www.thegrowingspace.com.au
* Two Way Street http://www.twowaystreet.com.au/

The catalogue includes PL from the above training providers available for the next six months. We review and update the catalogue on a regular basis, so its contents remain current and useful to SA schools.

*Please note JFA Purple Orange takes no responsibility for these training providers and their services. We have attempted to showcase providers that we think align with the intent of the Inclusive School Communities Project, however we encourage you to do your own research and decide whether the training provider is suitable for your requirements. We have not audited these training providers and therefore, cannot endorse their services. Please contact the training provider directly for information about their services.*

The catalogue is arranged in alphabetical order according to the following themes:

* Autism
* Behaviour
* Communication
* Disability Support
* Engagement and Teaching
* Inclusive Culture and Practices
* Inclusive Technology
* Intellectual Disability
* Literacy and Numeracy
* NDIS
* Neurodevelopmental Disorders
* Neurological Disorders
* Personalised Learning
* Physical Disability

*Please note these themes were selected for ease and convenience of using the catalogue. Information and training on specific disabilities and disability types is helpful however we would like to emphasise that each person is unique; the presentation of a disability and that person’s strengths and needs will be different.*

There is a ‘search’ button on the webpage where you can enter key words to find PL that suits your requirements. Each entry includes its title, description, date/time/location, and registration details.

## Actions

How to use the Catalogue

There are various ways this catalogue can be used by SA schools. The following guidance is one way for schools to build their staff’s capacity for inclusive practices and develop a body of knowledge around inclusive education:

Step 1: Establish commitment to building the capacity of school staff for inclusive practices

We know that when schools invest in and prioritize building the capacity of school staff for inclusive teaching and practices, there are benefits for the whole school community. The school leadership team plays an important role in motivating school staff to learn and implement inclusive practices. School leaders are encouraged to develop the habit of reviewing the catalogue of PL opportunities on the Inclusive School Communities website at the start of each term and identifying focus areas for building staff capacity for inclusion.

Step 2: Ensure school staff attend PL on inclusive practices and/or disability on a regular basis and share this knowledge widely

We recommend that three or four school staff (such as the school principal/deputy, counsellor or wellbeing officer, teacher, and teacher aide) attend and participate in a workshop/webinar/lecture on inclusive practices and/or disability at least once a term. Having a small group of school staff (rather than only one) attend the training will mean several minds to figure out how to apply the learnings at the school; this will increase the likelihood of knowledge being successfully disseminated among the school and improvement to practices occurring. This small group may already be a professional learning community (PLC) or may form one after attending the training. PLCs are an approach to school improvement where groups of teachers work collaboratively at the school level to improve student outcomes.[[4]](#footnote-4)​ Information about PLCs that may be helpful for SA schools interested in this approach is available on the Victorian Department of Education and Training website https://www.education.vic.gov.au.

We encourage schools to identify the best method of harvesting the knowledge gained by staff attending PL and sharing this with their school communities (staff, students and families). For example, schools may set up the practice of their staff giving a presentation and summary handout at a staff meeting after attending PL to share the learnings and improve practice broadly.

A systematic investment in these types of PL opportunities will enable school staff to build knowledge, skills, and capacity for inclusion on a regular basis. This can help build a coalition of leadership and practice focused on inclusion within the school.

## More Information

A suite of Supported Online courses is available to support classroom teachers and support staff. The courses address a range of diverse disabilities and additional learning and support needs. https://aus.oltinternational.net/information/south-australia

Online modules explore evidence-based approaches for your PLC to maximise its effectiveness and support consistent improvement. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/pdplconlinemodules.aspx

The DSE eLearning supports excellence in teaching and learning by building teachers' practical skills in identifying students with disabilities and adjusting their practice in response. https://www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/professional-learning/format/e-learning-5

## Acknowledgement

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1. OECD (2019). TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. OECD (2019). TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Haines, M., Jackson, R., & Williams, R., (2012). Building Inclusive School Communities. A project report prepared by JFA Purple Orange for the Minister for Education and Child Development, South Australian Government. JFA Purple Orange, Unley, South Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. State Government of Victoria (2019). Professional learning communities. Retrieved from https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/improvement/plc/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1

    [↑](#footnote-ref-4)