



TASMANIAN
CATHOLIC
education commission

POLICY

EQUITY

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policy No: O36:2009

Equity Policy

RELATED DOCUMENTS

RATIONALE

Catholic Schools and Colleges should ensure that all students have equitable access to the benefits of education for life.

'All in the school...community should recognise it as a place where all people, including those who live in poverty or who are marginalised, disenfranchised or suffering from health conditions, have their rights and dignity upheld'.

Archbishop's Charter for Catholic Schools, 2008

The concept of inclusion extends well beyond education to society itself. In Catholic education, inclusion is based on the philosophy that schools should, without question, provide for the needs of all children in their communities. Inclusive schools welcome all children and adolescents to a place of learning, and celebrate diversity in ability, as well as cultural, racial, ethnic and social background. It is a commitment to educate each student to his or her potential in a mainstream educational setting.

'Australian Schooling promotes equity and excellence which means that governments and all school sectors must provide all students with access to high quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socio-economic background or geographic location...'

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008

Inclusive Catholic education focuses on creating an environment that supports and nurtures all students. Building inclusive Catholic schools is informed by research and also founded in the Catholic tradition.

The power of the Holy Spirit does not only enlighten and console us. It also points us to the future, to the coming of God's Kingdom ... It gives the blind new sight; it sets the downtrodden free, and it creates unity in and through diversity (cf. Lk 4:18–19; Is 61:1–2). This power can create a new world: it can 'renew the face of the earth' (cf. Ps 104:30)

Pope Benedict XVI

DEFINITIONS

Equity '*...the concept of equal access to school education and the fair and just distribution of benefits from the school education system. The concept is based on the belief that all children have the right to an effective education'.*

The National Strategy for Equity in School, 1994

IMPACTS OF LEGISLATION ON THIS POLICY

Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)

In Australia, people with disabilities have their rights protected through the Disability Discrimination Act (1992). Under the Act the definition of 'disability' is very wide. It includes physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. It ensures that people with disabilities cannot be treated less fairly than people without a disability¹.

Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education (2005)

The Disability Standards for Education (2005) specify how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disabilities. They provide clarity around the responsibilities of education and training service providers under the Disability and Discrimination Act, and the rights of people with disabilities in relation to education and training.²

Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act (1998)

In 1998 Tasmania enacted anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination in relation to a wide range of attributes, including disability.³

¹ http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/

² <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/comlaw>

³ http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/aa1998204/

POLICY

Catholic Education Tasmania is committed to providing accessible, inclusive and equitable educational opportunities to its diverse student population.

In making this commitment, Catholic Education Tasmania:

- recognises that students can be enabled to achieve according to their individual potential, regardless of their personal and/or social circumstances and/or geographic location, and
- aims to provide teaching and learning practices which are inclusive, and socially and culturally responsive, in order to ensure equitable opportunities for each student's success.

PRINCIPLES

1. All personnel in the school community contribute to equity in education. Principles of equity should permeate all policies and practices, not be additional or separate issues for school planning.
2. Students with a wide range of ability and educational needs will be supported in all levels of Catholic education with effective provision and use of human and material resources.
3. Schools should respond to diversity of need and experience, respect distinctive cultural and racial identities, and value contributions of all ability groups by making appropriate educational provision within the curriculum. Educational services provided will reflect the diverse needs and varying preferences of these students, with a variety of models of provision utilised.
4. Students with disabilities will attend a school setting, which is as close as possible to the norms and patterns of schooling experienced by other students, and provides the least possible restriction on their right to lead a fulfilling life, while adequately catering for their special needs.

5. Schools should provide a learning environment that is free from harassment, bias and discriminatory practices and promotes personal respect and physical and emotional safety.
6. Schools should aim to educate all students enrolled with programs to match the capabilities and needs of the students. The content, language and methodology of education programs should be flexible in order to meet the differing educational needs of students.
7. Schools should provide processes for collaborative decision-making involving parents, carers, teachers, professionals, support personnel and children and young persons. This process recognises that there may be differing views and expectations of the purpose of education which need to be acknowledged and valued in order to develop effective partnerships.
8. Financial support for students, as identified in criteria set by the Commonwealth and State Governments, is a co responsibility of all those involved in Catholic Education in Tasmania, and will be allocated as per the funding agreements and guidelines of the Commonwealth Schools Assistance Act 2008, for the period 2009-2012.
9. Educational services to students with disabilities will be provided in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and related Disability Standards for Education (2005), and the Tasmanian Education Act (1994).

INDICATORS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Indicators - System, Region and Schools

- Principles of equity and social justice are embedded in policy, practices and decision-making at all levels.
- Professional learning opportunities are provided to enhance an understanding of the recognition of differences and the factors that contribute to educational disadvantage, especially an appreciation of factors such as: poverty, gender, disability, sexuality and cultural and linguistic diversity.

- Community capacity is built through effective partnerships within the school community and of the agencies responsible for supporting children, young people and their families.
- Evidence of effective delivery of inclusive education is documented and disseminated.
- Plans reflect an ethos, organisation, culture and values underpinned by principles of social justice and democratic processes.
- Data on access, participation, outcomes and retention of diverse groups are used to evaluate progress, to identify priorities for further action, to plan for improvement and to inform professional learning communities.

Indicators – Teaching and Learning

- There is a ‘no blame’ culture that is underpinned by high expectations for all groups of students.
- Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are aligned and meet the needs of diverse student groups.
- Curriculum is intellectually challenging for all students and connected with student and community imperatives and experiences.
- Curriculum programs are informed by student outcome data and by current research relevant to diverse student needs.
- Teachers build bridges from the knowledge and skills that students bring from their homes and communities to the knowledge and skills they need for success in schooling.
- All students are provided with the explicit and scaffolded teaching they need for success in schooling and beyond.
- Students, parents/carers are recognised as partners together with teachers in the teaching/learning process and opportunities are provided for communication between all, for example through negotiating curriculum and assessment.

- Evaluation of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment provides evidence that the interests, skills, knowledge and experiences of diverse groups are central features in the design of learning.

REFERENCES

Operational Procedures in Guidelines / Handbook for Targeted Programs for;
Students with Disabilities,
Students at Risk in Literacy and Numeracy,
Aboriginal Education,
Refugee / Humanitarian Entrants Strategy, and
Students in Country and Remote Areas.

FORMS

Nil

APPENDICES

Nil



SIGNED:

Chairman of the TCEC

DATE:

28 July 2011

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TCEO Contact Officer:	Christine Butterworth – Manager Student Support