

FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION 2019-29

INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION
FOR ALL
CHILDREN AND
STUDENTS





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Chief Executive's Message

We recognise that with the right support, every child can succeed.



The *Framework for Inclusion 2019-29* promotes an environment in Northern Territory Government schools which is inclusive, fair and focused on delivering learning to meet individual needs. The framework aligns with the Department of Education's *Education NT Strategy 2018-22* and its commitment to a strong, inclusive public education system that gives all children and students in the Northern Territory the opportunity to engage and grow to achieve.

We have an obligation under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE)* to ensure every child in our public education system feels welcomed, accepted and engaged so they are able to learn and achieve regardless of their background or personal circumstances.

The development of a robust, inclusive education system is ongoing work. This framework sets out a plan of key actions phased over ten years across three themes: actions focussed on children, families and communities; actions focussed on schools and school staff; and actions focussed on system improvements. Our actions are subject to cycles of review and feedback between each phase, to measure our impact and to tailor our planning and implementation for the next phase.

The *Framework for Inclusion* places the best interests of children at the heart of decision making and takes a holistic approach to children's wellbeing and family engagement. It supports school leaders and all school staff to create inclusive learning environments for all children, and promotes the active participation of the whole school community.

VICKI BAYLIS

Our children and young people

37.2%
of NT children were
developmentally
vulnerable on one or
more AEDC domain
when they started school
in 2015 compared to
22% nationally.

(Australian Early Development
Census National Report, 2015)

The NT has more than
34 150
students across
153
government schools

(Department of Education
Annual Report 2017-18)

71%
of NT schools are
located in remote and
very remote communities.

44%
of NT students are
enrolled in these schools.

(Department of Education
Annual Report 2017-18)

5876
NT children were the subject
of a notification investigation;

1390 were on a care
and protection order, and

1326 were in
out-of-home care

(Child Protection Australia 2016-17)

27%
of children in
NT schools
receive education
adjustments —the
highest proportion
nationally.

(NCCD Report 2017)

80-90%
of Aboriginal children
in remote and
50% in urban
schools experience
fluctuating Conductive
Hearing Loss.

90 children have
a permanent Sensory
Neural Hearing Loss.

(Internal Department of
Education Data, 2019)

411
NT children were under
youth justice supervision and
248
were in detention

(Youth Justice in Australia 2016-17)

Of the students
with a social-
emotional
disability,
684
have Attention
Deficit
Hyperactivity
Disorder.

(Internal Department of
Education Data, 2019)

There are
697
students diagnosed
as being on the
autism spectrum
in NT Government
Schools.

(Internal Department of
Education Data, 2019)

The **85** students with a
diagnosis of Foetal Alcohol
Spectrum are supported in
special education schools
and mainstream schools.

(Internal Department of
Education Data, 2019)

Context

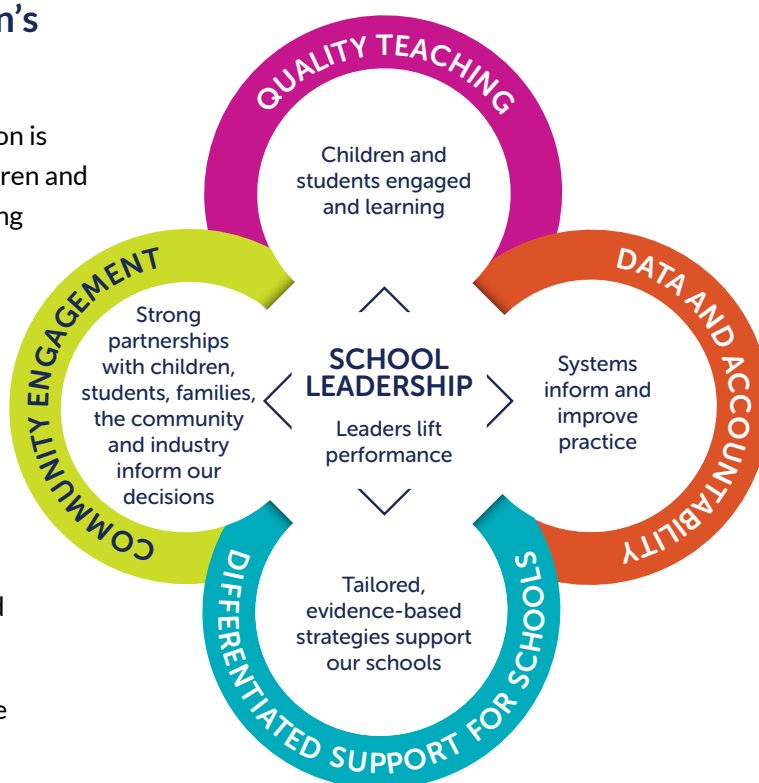
The Department of Education's strategic agenda

Access to a high quality, inclusive education is key to creating a bright future for all children and students, and is the foundation of a thriving community and a strong economy in the Northern Territory. The *Education NT Strategy 2018–22* recognises the importance of all children and students, being able to access quality education.

The *Education NT Strategy* commits to a public education system that gives every child the opportunity to engage, grow and achieve, through a focus on:

- **Leadership**—leaders lift performance
- **Quality teaching**—children and students engaged and learning
- **Differentiated support**—tailored, evidence-based strategies to support schools
- **Community engagement**—strong partnerships with children, students, parents and the community
- **Data and accountability**—systems inform and improve our performance.

“We recognise that with the right support, every child can engage and grow to achieve”



The *Framework for Inclusion 2019–29* aligns with the overarching principles, goals and key directions of the *Education NT Strategy* and sits within the national and Northern Territory broader social reform agenda.

Inclusion is a whole-of-school and whole-of-system issue. The *Education NT Strategy* and this framework recognise the need for collaboration across agencies and organisations to deliver high quality, holistic, strengths-based support and services, targeted to the needs of individual children and their families.



Framework for Inclusion

The *Framework for Inclusion 2019–29* is a ten-year plan for inclusive education in the Northern Territory. It focuses on:

- ensuring that all children and students can access an education and contribute to their community
- affirming children's rights to education, safety and wellbeing under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- developing individual strengths, with high and appropriate expectations for each and every child and student
- partnering with parents in the education of their children and ensuring they have real opportunities to contribute their voices to decision-making over matters that affect them
- partnering with community organisations, services and agencies to meet the needs of all children and students
- strengthening the professional practice of staff across the system to respond effectively to the learning needs of all children and students
- using evidence to target resources to where they are needed.

Why is inclusion important for all children and students?

Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all children and students can learn and participate together.

Children and students experience inclusive education when they can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similarly-aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and every day practices.

Children and students in the Northern Territory have a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. This framework aims to ensure that all children can:

- learn in a safe, supportive environment
- access and participate in high quality education alongside their peers
- receive reasonable adjustments and supports tailored to their learning needs
- participate in school life.

“Let us work together for a world of opportunity and dignity for all, a future of inclusion, one in which we all gain by leaving no one behind.”

(Ban Ki Moon, 2016)

Who does inclusion apply to?

As different groups of children and students experience different barriers to inclusion, this framework will implement strategies, policies and support practices that address the unique needs of children and students:

- with a disability
- who exhibit challenging behaviours
- with mental health needs
- who are vulnerable for another reason, such as being involved in the child protection or juvenile justice systems.

This framework recognises that inclusive education strategies and practices may be needed on an ongoing basis or temporarily, depending on a child's needs.

“ *Inclusion extends beyond the practice of instruction.*

Inclusion is a mindset, a culture, which, when embedded as non-negotiable practice in a school environment, produces amazing outcomes. It implies making learning accessible through differentiation, the crafting of individual curricula, honoring context and culture, nurturing relationships with families, and continually interrogating practice to ensure all are deriving benefit. **”**

(Clare Ryan, 2016)

Our inclusion principles

- We respect and value diversity.
- We focus on meeting the individual needs of children and students.
- We support children and students, parents, carers and families to have a voice and be involved in decision-making.
- Early assessment and intervention are essential.
- We provide learning pathways for all children and students, using an inclusive approach.
- Ongoing monitoring of the growth and achievement of all children and students is a priority.
- We will work with a range of agencies, government and non-government, to meet the needs of all children and students.
- Resourcing is targeted to where it is needed.

Our inclusion partners

- Our partnerships are child centered and strengths-based.
- Our partners will be drawn from inside and outside education and include: health and allied health and family support services, government and non-government organisations that provide assessment and support, communities, families and carers.
- We work with children and students, their families, other agencies and specialist services to create a shared understanding of our agreed direction and a commitment to working together.

CASE STUDY - EARLY INTERVENTION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Established in 2017, the Mimik-ga Centre provides Darwin families with access to early intervention services for children aged from birth to 12 years.

Mimik-ga operates on an integrated services model, informed by a multi-disciplinary approach. Its objectives are to:

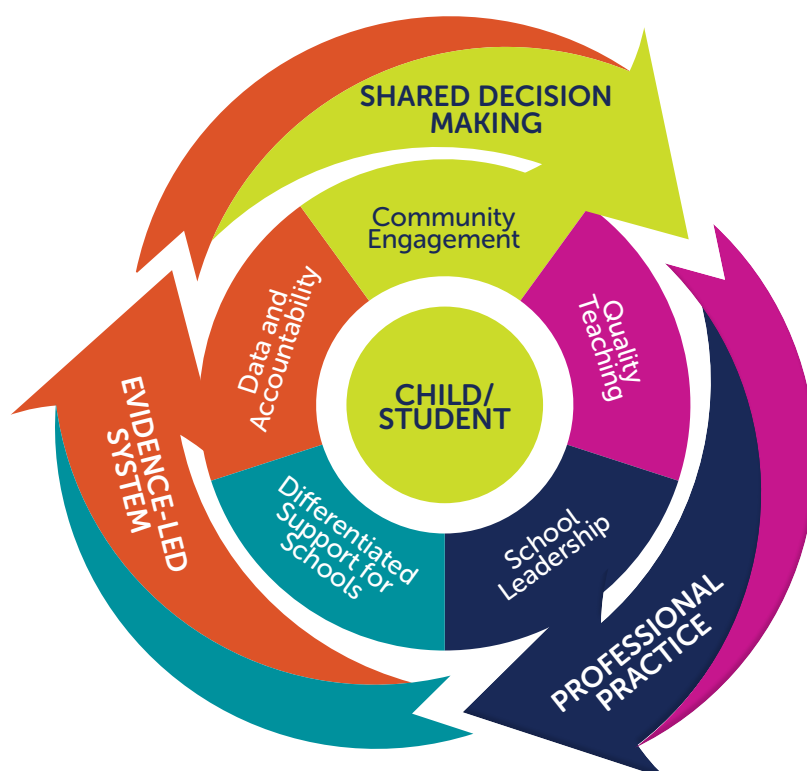
- *work with families to support the early development of children from birth to 12 years and make it possible so that these children can begin school ready to learn;*
- *create a space where integrated child and family services can thrive to support transitions to school and strengthen parent engagement in their children's learning;*
- *co-locate common support services to increase accessibility, streamline service delivery and deliver high quality multi-disciplinary service responses.*

(Milne et al, 2018)

Our focus areas

The three focus areas for the *Framework for Inclusion* are centered on recommendations from the *Review of Policy and Practice for Students with Additional Needs*, conducted by Victoria University's Centre for International Research on Education Systems. They align seamlessly with the focus areas of the *Education NT Strategy*, and contribute to the development of an inclusive high quality education system that is responsive to the needs of all learners.

- **Shared decision making** – our families, other agencies and services are respected and valued partners in decision making for quality outcomes. This focus area aligns with the *Education NT Strategy* focus on Community Engagement.
- **Professional practice** – our educators and leaders are equipped to respond effectively to the needs of all children and students. We harness expertise within the system and through our partners to grow a skilled and capable workforce. This focus area aligns with the *Education NT Strategy* focus on Quality Teaching and School Leadership.
- **Evidence-led system** – our actions are child centered, based on evidence and reflect best practice. This focus area aligns with the *Education NT Strategy* focus on Differentiated Support for Schools and Data and Accountability.



Our priority actions

In addition to being grouped into three focus areas, our actions to implement this framework over the next ten years fall into three themes: actions focussed on children and students, families and communities; actions focussed on schools and school staff; and actions focussed on system improvements.

1. FOR CHILDREN, STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES (SHARED DECISION MAKING)

- A. We will ensure that all children and students have access to quality education and are supported to reach their potential by developing better mechanisms to identify and respond to different needs earlier.
- B. We will empower and encourage families to be more actively involved in decision-making about their children's education by listening to the voices of children and families and providing accurate and timely information about the options available for their children.
- C. We will expand programs that allow children and students to feel safe, respected and supported at school.
- D. We will develop mechanisms to gather feedback from children and parents about their experiences of inclusive education.

2. FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL STAFF (PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE)

- A. We will explore service delivery approaches to inclusion that involve mainstream schools, specialist schools and external specialist agencies.
- B. We will establish professional development programs and resources to build the capacity of all school staff to deliver inclusive learning environments and understand and respond to the holistic needs of all children and students and their families.
- C. We will work with universities to expand pre-service and in-service programs to build the capacity of school staff to provide an inclusive education for all children and students.
- D. We will develop and implement programs to support the health and wellbeing of school staff and their capacity to provide support to children and students and their families.

3. FOR THE SYSTEM (EVIDENCE-LED SYSTEM)

- A. We will develop programs and integrated approaches that help schools and early learning centres support all children and students, to reach their potential.
- B. We will review existing targeted and intensive support programs for vulnerable children and students to ensure they can access and feel supported in mainstream schooling.
- C. We will develop systems to capture, analyse and share data to support the implementation of inclusive education approaches.
- D. We will develop funding models that are targeted to children's needs for inclusion and explore the options for new services and fit for purpose infrastructure.

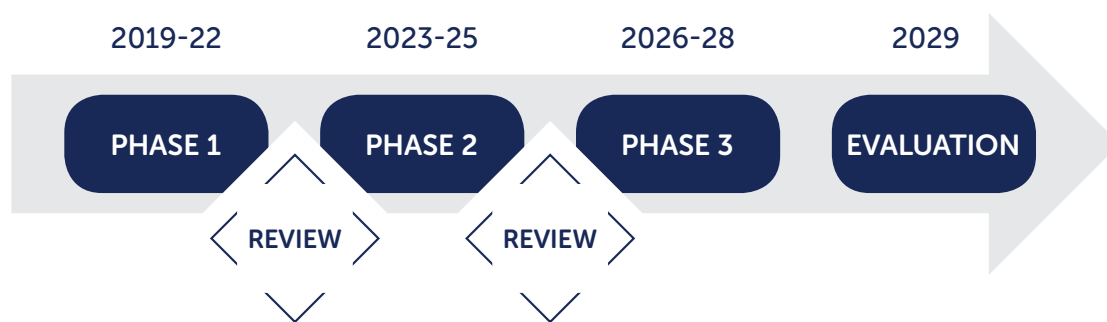
“There is clear and consistent evidence that inclusive educational settings can confer substantial short and long-term benefits for students with and without disabilities.”

(Dr Thomas Hehir, 2016)

Performance management and evaluation

Implementation timeline

The *Framework for Inclusion* will be implemented in three phases. Progress will be reviewed at the end of each phase, to measure our impact and facilitate effective implementation of the next phase. The framework will be evaluated in 2029.



As a first step we will work collaboratively with all our stakeholders to develop an implementation plan that outlines clear actions and measures of accountability and achievement.

Measuring our impact

The measures for the framework align with those in the *Education NT Strategy*:

- Participation, attendance and retention
- Successful transitions to school and from school to work, further education or training
- Enhanced capacity to monitor the growth and achievement of all children
- Feedback from children and students, families and school staff
- Collaboration with schools to ensure practices align with legislative requirements and reflect best practice.

These measures will allow us to track our progress against our goal of ensuring that all children and students, are engaging, growing and achieving within our public education system.

Governance

Inclusion and ensuring that all children and students have the chance to engage, grow and achieve is everyone's business.

We will establish a tiered system of governance arrangements that includes three advisory groups – one comprising peak bodies, one made up of parents and carers and one comprising students. The advisory groups will meet twice a year to monitor the implementation and delivery of the framework and feedback from public forums, and report annually on progress and impact to the Department of Education's Executive Board.

The public forums will provide a mechanism for local contribution to the ongoing implementation of the framework. Meeting once a year, the public forums will:

- contribute local knowledge and expertise to the development and monitoring of the detailed action plans
- assist in the identification of problems and possible solutions that may occur in implementation of both strategies and achievement of the priority actions, and
- facilitate the sharing of information between parents, local stakeholders and the advisory groups.

EDUCATION EXECUTIVE BOARD

Parent and
Carers
Advisory
Group

Key
Stakeholder
Advisory
Group

Student
Voice

PUBLIC FORUMS

CASE STUDY - ENHANCING LOCAL RESPONSES

A community that includes a special school and a range of mainstream primary schools has a local model of partnering and collaboration that results in enhanced inclusion for their children. The model includes providing children with intensive early supports and intervention with the express aim of transitioning them to a mainstream school before upper primary.

Strong collaboration and ongoing communication between the special school and other local schools means that a strong program of staged and supported transitions from the special school to mainstream schools has been developed.

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