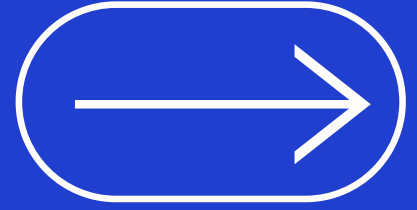


SCHOOLS 4 ALL



Who are we?



We are the **Student Alliance 4 Inclusion**, a community organisation made up and led by students with lived experience of disability from Australia with the common goal of ensuring that **students with disability are guaranteed their right to high quality, accessible and inclusive education.**

This document is our overview of the importance of inclusive schools, how to build inclusive schools and how to seek help if you aren't being included and you're struggling at school socially (for example, being bullied, or feel isolated).

An important quote...

"When young people discover they can be agents of change, wonderful things happen. They start to serve in the neighborhoods, learn about public issues, create innovative solutions to tough public challenges and eventually become the voters, community project builders and leaders in our communities and nation."

- Alma Powell

Our guiding principles

We are guided by the principles of inclusive education, as explained in the CRPD.

A summarised version of these principles are:

disabled and non-disabled students learning in the same general classroom

universal design for learning

academic and social support for all

ending segregation

co-design with students and families

Content

What does this guide contain?

- 1 Is your school inclusive?
- 2 Why inclusion matters?
- 3 Be a better school mate
- 4 Bullying: Be a Defender not a Bystander
- 5 What if you are being bullied?
- 6 How can students help build inclusive schools?

SCHOOLS 4 ALL

PART 1: IS YOUR SCHOOL INCLUSIVE?



1 all students are welcome and belong!

No one needs to earn the right to be included and no one needs to show they are “ready” to be a part of their school. Students with and without disabilities, students of different races and cultural backgrounds all have the same right to be there, to learn in the same classrooms and to have the same opportunities to participate in the life of the school. Students are helped to learn if they need it, but they are not separated from regular classrooms because of it. **If your school has separate buildings or rooms for students with disability, that’s just not inclusion!**

2 differences are understood!

This means that your school and teachers encourage students to learn about and understand about all the things that make us a diverse society and different individuals, because before we can really respect differences we need to learn and understand what makes everyone different.

3 differences are respected!

This means that everyone is respected and their differences are accepted by teachers and students as natural and valuable. Students are not forced to act the same as everyone else and students are not favoured or shamed depending on their grades, their skills or who they are – that is just not inclusion!

4 students support each other to do their best!

Students are encouraged to work together and support each other. Individual progress is celebrated but so is helping everyone to be their best. Students are encouraged to help others that need assistance, in class (this is called ‘**peer tutoring**’) and in the playground.

5 the physical and learning environments are accessible

An accessible school means that everyone in the school is able to fully participate. Students with disabilities should be able to freely move around the school building, participate in the same learning and social activities and communicate with their teachers and peers. When students are physically separated unable to access the same location or participate in activities along with their peers, they will end up feeling excluded and isolated.

6 everybody is committed to inclusion

An accessible school means that everyone in the school is able to fully participate. Students with disabilities should be able to freely move around the school building, participate in the same learning and social activities and communicate with their teachers and peers. When students are physically separated unable to access the same location or participate in activities along with their peers, they will end up feeling excluded and isolated.



How does an inclusive school look?

An inclusive school isn't just about having students of different races, cultural background or with disability in the school, just physically "being there". It's about what your school does to make sure that each student doesn't feel left out – whether from their classroom, their class lessons, from the playground, from sporting and other school activities and every other aspect of school life.

Some students, like students with disability or diverse learning needs are at greater risk of being excluded – so inclusion is all about making sure this doesn't happen.

What IS inclusion?

all students included in the regular education classrooms all day, every day.

all students working in naturally supportive and flexible groupings with other students regardless of individual ability

all students are presumed competent – they are expected to be able to do things, it is not just assumed that they can't

students supported (when needed, such as through modifications to class lessons, assistance from education assistants and 'peer tutoring') to participate in the same core class lessons as the rest of the class

all students known and valued as full members of the school community, assisted to develop meaningful friendships with peers and to participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

What ISN'T inclusion?

a student being only allowed to participate in the class if they are "keeping up"

a student being frequently "pulled out" of class for extra assistance

a student working separately in a corner of the classroom with the education assistant while the teacher instructs the rest of the class

a student being given a separate "special" curriculum or "program" (as opposed to being supported where needed, including through lesson modifications, to participate in the same core lesson)

a student demonstrating independence as a condition of being in the classroom

UN Committee on the CRPD

The United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities has said what inclusive education means, to help governments make sure that they are complying with their obligations under Article 24 of that Convention to have an inclusive education system.

You can access an explanation of it, made by All Means All, by scanning this QR code.





Myths about Inclusive Education

There are many **myths surrounding inclusive education**, which are often used to **justify segregated education**. Below, we've debunked a few of the common myths!

Myth 1: General Ed classes don't provide enough support

Many argue that general education classrooms won't provide enough support that students with disability need.

REAL DEAL: Our laws provide for supports in regular schools and good inclusive practices happen in schools in Australia and elsewhere (e.g. Italy has been educating ALL students in general classrooms together since the 1970s!)

Myth 2: Disabled students do better in separate schools/classes

Many argue that students with disability do better when they are educated in separate schools or classrooms.

REAL DEAL: 40 years of research proves that students with disability learn more when they are in the same classrooms as non-disabled students.

Myth 3: Disabled students negatively impact the learning of others

Many argue that students with disability in regular classrooms have a negative impact on the learning of other students.

REAL DEAL: Research shows non-disabled students do just as well and also have the advantage of developing understanding, empathy and acceptance of diversity.

Myth 4: Inclusion doesn't work unless they keep up to pace with the general classroom

Many argue that a student can't be included unless they can keep up with the pace of the general school curriculum.

REAL DEAL: The curriculum is for everybody. There are teaching strategies and practices that are all about making the general school curriculum suitable to ALL learners!

Myth 5: Inclusion is a favour, to help them feel part of society

Many argue that schools include students with disability as a favour, to help them feel part of society.

REAL DEAL: Inclusion is not charity. It is a fundamental right, in international and Australian legislation.





PART 2: Why Inclusion Matters

Why inclusion matters

School is the gateway to our future society and more inclusive communities start with more inclusive local schools that value diversity and respect the right of ALL students to be welcomed, safe and to belong. More inclusive schools not only benefit students from different cultural backgrounds and students with disabilities but ALL students.

In inclusive schools, ALL students of ALL abilities, learn the skills they need to live full lives as part of their communities and to build the communities of the future.

Inclusion is happening EVERYWHERE! All over the world, there are schools that are inclusive. Did you know that in Italy 99% of students with disabilities have been educated in regular schools since the late 1970s? It's now the same in Portugal and in New Brunswick in Canada!

Feeling safe and included at school

There is no more important thing to how students feel at school than the quality of their relationships with other students.

When we choose not to acknowledge some students in our classroom or school, that in itself sends a strong message that they are not valued. No one has to be friends with everyone, but when we see students with few friends, or no friends, all of us can reach out and help them build a bridge to their peers, to their classroom and to their school.

It is only when we offer humanity, that we experience humanity ourselves.

So many times students say, "It was only when I got to know ... Sarah ... or Lee ... or Ahmed, that I realised they were really quite cool, funny or interesting."

Everyone has something to contribute – and everyone needs an opportunity to do it.

Inclusive peer relationships are not about charity, pity or making ourselves feel good about being "so nice", they are about respecting another person's right to be part of our classroom or school – to receive an inclusive education together with and amongst their local community.

PART 3: Be a Better School Mate

In the words of Marta Sodano...

"I made friends who explained to me that 'I am who I am, and there is nothing more beautiful than being yourself'. There were also some bullies, who told me to do foolish things, which I did because I was a bit naïve. But thanks to the good advice of teachers and friends, I learned how to make everyone respect me, defend myself and think before acting."

- Marta Sodano, student with Down syndrome and inclusion advocate





PART 4: Bullying: Be a Defender not a Bystander

Introduction to bullying

Students with disability are often some of the most likely people to be bullied in schools. Children who bully others can do this for many reasons. Sometimes it is simply to try to “impress” the other students that are watching – physically or online. Sometimes it is not about trying to make the victim feel bad or embarrassed, but about the person doing the bullying making themselves feel better about themselves.

By watching and saying nothing, or worse, by laughing – in a real way, students may encourage the bullying.

Don't be a bystander. Be a defender.

Why is it important to report it when a disabled student is being bullied?

When bullied, students with disability may...

be less likely to know that the behaviour they are facing is bullying

be less likely to know how to report bullying

face barriers to articulating that they are being bullied

be more likely to internalise the ableism and bullying they face, because they face so much of it

Human rights defenders

There are 5 easy steps to move from being a bystander to being an active defender - a human rights defender.



Becoming a human rights defender

1. notice what is going on

Especially for more vulnerable students, it is important to acknowledge bullying, abuse and inappropriate behaviour, as some students may be unable or uncomfortable to call it out themselves.

2. recognise that bullying and abuse is very harmful, sometimes fatal

Bullying and abuse can not only result in physical harm - but emotional harm too. Many students may internalise the ableism or general bullying that they face, which can lead to low self esteem and poor mental health.

3. take responsibility for helping out

helping is not about ‘interfering’ in the bullying incident - it's about responding to the needs of another student who may need support.

4. choose an appropriate way to intervene

here are some ways to ‘intervene’ without taking on the bully personally:

- support the victim
- discourage others from laughing/encouraging the bullying
- immediately report the bullying
- tell a parent/close adult
- tell a teacher
- contact one of the services below:
 - Kids Help Line (1800 55 1800)
 - Bullying No Way - Safe Australian Schools Together

5. carry out an intervention

once you have worked out an appropriate way to intervene - carry it out. Actions change things, just good thoughts don't. By being a defender, not a bystander, you can help to stop bullying.





PART 5: What if you are being bullied?

What to do if you are being bullied?

All of us sometime feel that someone is being deliberately mean to us and that we don't deserve it.

But bullying is usually more than that – it is more than an argument – it usually involves someone or some people repeatedly doing things, saying things (like calling you names or spreading rumours about you) or posting things online with the intention of hurting you, causing you distress and embarrassment or excluding you from your friends. It often involves someone that is more powerful than you using their position, power or popularity to harm, distress or exclude you.

Bullying is never OK and it can cause you harm, physically and mentally (like anxiety and depression), if nothing is done about it – and that harm may not be just now, but may also last until you are much older too.

So if you are being bullied don't just "accept it". You don't deserve it. Do something about it quickly.

The first step is to know that you are not alone and that there are people you can talk to for advice and help. Start with a friend you trust, an older sibling, a teacher that you are comfortable talking to or your parents.

**nothing is wrong
with you.**

Seeking help

1. Kids Helpline

call 1800 55 1800 or
scan the QR code



2. Bullying No Way - Safe Australian Schools Together

scan the QR code



3. eSafety Commissioner - Keeping Kids Safe Online

scan the QR code



4. Student Wellbeing Hub - Student Information

scan the QR code



you can also seek help by:

- chatting with a trusted friend
- chatting with a parent
- chatting with a trusted adult
- chatting with a teacher
- chatting with an older sibling, cousin, etc.





PART 6: How can students help build inclusive schools?

What can you do at your school?

1. Set up a Student Inclusion Committee in your school to develop some projects that will help to make your school more inclusive and accessible to everyone. Include students with disability and diverse backgrounds on your Committee. Their perspectives are really important. Talk to your teachers or Principal because there may be a teacher or other staff member at your school who is responsible for making your school more inclusive.

2. Hold a School Inclusion Day or Week. Some countries, like Canada, have a whole School Inclusion Month. The USA has an Inclusion Week. Ask your Principal or a staff member responsible for school inclusion to help. Click [here for some ideas](#) to celebrate inclusion at school.

3. Organise presentations by people from diverse backgrounds, like students, their parents or people from your community to come to your school or classroom to talk about their culture, religion or what it is like to live with a disability. Hearing about difference from people that know, is the best way of understanding difference.

4. Encourage your school to organise presentations on bullying. Talking about bullying and abuse, including bullying online, is the best way of educating students about identifying and responding to bullying and abuse – which is so important to having an inclusive school culture.

6. Encourage each classroom to have “peer tutors”. Teachers should be encouraged to pair “early finishers” with the students who need a little more assistance or for concepts to be repeated for them so that they can better understand. This is called “peer tutoring” and studies show that it helps all students – even the “early finishers” because by having to explain the concepts to other students they learn even more.

6. Have a conversation with someone new every day. It is easy to get stuck being happy just hanging around each day with your “besties”. But not everyone has “besties”. There are so many cool, funny and interesting students in every school that have trouble talking to other students or making friends. But if you start the conversation, and work to keep it going, you will often be surprised by how friendly and interesting they really are.

7. Ask people how they are. When you think someone may not be feeling happy at school or in your classroom ask them how they are feeling, “Are you OK? You don’t seem yourself. How can I help to make things better?” Those words say a lot to someone. Sometimes all they need is to hear that someone has noticed them and that will help them talk about what is really bothering them. It shows them that they are valued, which is what everyone wants to be.

8. Mind your language. Think about the words that you use and how they may make other students feel, even when you don’t mean to be offensive. Here is some information about [disability and language](#).

9. Just be friendly and respect differences. Diversity is about who we all are but inclusion is about how we treat each other. You will be surprised how being positive and friendly towards other students helps change the feel of the whole school. Not in one day, but over time.

