



CATHOLIC  
EDUCATION  
MELBOURNE

Horizons  
of Hope

FOUNDATION STATEMENT:

# Learning Diversity

in a Catholic School



## What is Learning Diversity?

Diversity encompasses all learners across cultural, academic, social emotional and physical attributes noting these are not mutually exclusive. 'Learning diversity' refers to the infinite variety of life experiences and attributes a child brings to their formal learning at school. Educators seek to meet the needs of all learners, so that every student experiences success. While all educators have this goal, Catholic educators see each student as a sacred creation – 'made in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27). It is the

understanding that all students should be fully active members of their school community and that all professionals in a school share responsibility for their learning.

Learning diversity in Catholic schools is enacted through an inclusive pedagogy and a commitment to uphold the rights of all to be:

- welcomed
- valued
- acknowledged
- actively engaged in education.

Catholic schools in their endeavours to support all students to flourish, intervene as early as possible to meet the individual needs and abilities of each student.

*All students regardless of race, age or gender, by virtue of their dignity as human persons, have a right to an education that is suited to their particular needs and adapted to their ability. (Pope Paul VI 1965).*

## Alleluia

Water painting and pastels. (Kiera, Year 6)

Diversity is celebrated and valued as integral to the identity of the whole community. The encounter between different cultures, religions and languages is seen as a source of mutual enrichment. Catholic schools acknowledge the unique status of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians and allows the worldview of the Aboriginal student to find its place in a Catholic classroom. Catholic Schools also welcome refugee

and migrant learners from over 200 cultural backgrounds. All in the learning community embrace difference and diversity, seeing it as the context for dialogue, engagement and a deeper understanding of self, others and God.

Catholic schools uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and are committed to unified actions designed to provide every child with access to quality education

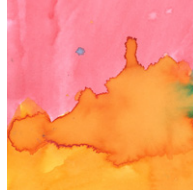
as a fundamental human right and as a prerequisite for human development. Catholic learning communities enact inclusive policies and practices to accurately identify the diverse learning needs of individuals, consider effective approaches of support, provide appropriate adjustments and monitor the progress of all learners. All students with diverse learning needs have a right to access a full and engaging education

on the same basis as their peers. Catholic schools seek to empower learners by celebrating difference and providing educational opportunities aimed at eliminating discrimination and focused on growth and progress for all. The United Nations statement (2015) proposes that,

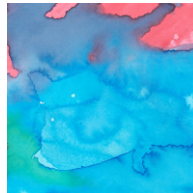
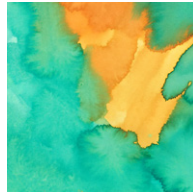
*With adequate support, all children, irrespective of their different needs, should be able to learn together in mainstream classrooms in their local communities.* (UNESCO 2015, p. 101)

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‘Learning diversity’ refers to the infinite variety of life experiences and attributes a child brings to their formal learning at school.



## How do Catholic schools respond to Learning Diversity?



Catholic schools celebrate the uniqueness and dignity of each person, and build respectful, collaborative relationships between students, teachers, families and the broader community. Educators consciously construct inclusive educational opportunities which enable every student to experience God's love and care and develop a positive sense of achievement through success and growth.

### **Embracing Diversity**

Every member of a Catholic school community has made a commitment to support the school's Catholic ethos and beliefs. Within the framework of this commitment Catholic school communities embrace and celebrate diversity and difference, welcoming all members of the community as equal. When educators incorporate

inclusive pedagogical choices into their practice, they foster an environment that embraces the education of all students regardless of their cultural background, socio-economic status, learning needs, exceptional ability or disability, and create educational communities that celebrate diversity and combat discrimination.

Catholic school communities embrace and celebrate diversity and difference, welcoming all members of the community as equal.



## Equity

Every student is entitled to enriching learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum. Equitable access for all students within a Catholic school recognises that each individual requires educational adjustments specific to their needs. Recognising that the same approach may not apply

for all students, educators make adjustments to facilitate access to the educational opportunities within the school. Educators work together to ensure that adjustments are individually tailored and designed to maximise growth for each learner.

**The Resurrection**

*Water painting and pastels. [Adam, Year 7]*



### Inclusion

At the heart of the work for Catholic educators is the formation of each young person. With this mindset, inclusive learning experiences are designed with a view that every student should be actively engaged in learning. Consideration is given to the range of learning opportunities offered to meet the needs of each student. Curriculum and assessment practices are flexible, build on learner's strengths, support academic and social capabilities, and cater for each student's learning needs.

Catholic schools are committed to fostering inclusive practices which respond to learning diversity so that all students are actively engaged in learning and experience success. Educators are supported to progressively develop expert knowledge of educational content and effective ways to design learning that supports growth for all learners.

*... set the same high expectations for all students and to provide differentiated levels of support to ensure that all students have a fair chance to achieve those expectations. (National Curriculum Board 2009, p. 8)*

ACARA and VCAA provide curriculum documentation guides to guide schools to consider and respond to the learning needs of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or backgrounds, students that are gifted and talented, and Students with Disability (SWD).

Educators in Catholic schools work with students with a range of diverse needs and abilities. Many require specific, targeted

support or planned opportunities to extend and expand their learning. Australia has clearly documented Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2015), which require all teachers to provide inclusive education programs and consider their own professional growth from graduate to lead teacher. Demonstrating explicit knowledge and understanding, lead or proficient teachers in Australia consider a variety of factors such as cultural, environmental,

physical, attitudinal, linguistic, communicative and social, to promote full and active participation, and optimise measurable learning achievement, for all students.

Catholic schools have access to a range of frameworks, services and resources such as the *CECV Intervention Framework* (CECV 2015; an updated version is scheduled for release in 2017), which articulates an Intervention Process underpinned by research, specifically the Universal Design

for Learning (UDL) methodology and a Response to Intervention (RtI), for Catholic schools to consider. An RtI approach provides advice on how to make adjustments for all students within curriculum design through:

- effective multistage screening
- monitoring of student progress
- data-driven decision-making process using a multi-levelled prevention/intervention approach.


Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development designed to provide individuals with equal opportunities to learn by allowing for appropriate adjustments by:

- presenting information in different ways
- providing multiple means of expression
- providing multiple means of engagement.

The Intervention Process is founded on the premise that all students should have access to high-quality core instruction. It includes a focus on the development of clear school processes for positive behaviour support and monitoring academic progress.



Catholic schools are committed to fostering inclusive practices which respond to learning diversity so that all students are actively engaged in learning and experience success.



## Why is Learning Diversity in a Catholic school important given the vision and context?

In order to achieve the full flourishing of each and every student, the inherent dignity of each person is respected and diversity is embraced and celebrated. Catholic schools are living testament to the life of Christ, built upon a community of faith. The Most Rev. Denis J Hart DD, Archbishop of

Melbourne, states in the foreword of the Catholic Education Melbourne (2015) *Strategic Plan* that:

*Catholic schools, founded on Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit, assist students to come to know God and to grow as human beings in the knowledge of God's love.*



Untitled  
[Wesley, Year 8]



● ● ● Catholic schools are living testament to the life of Christ, built upon a community of faith.

### **Honouring the sacred dignity of each person**

Catholic educators endeavour to nurture the full flourishing of each and every student and the spirit of Catholicism permeates the entire curriculum and culture of the learning environment. Through a deep and abiding respect and responding with respect to the needs of each and every student, Catholic schools acknowledge that each person is created in the image of God.

### **Embracing difference and diversity**

*Catholic education values the dignity, differences and infinite possibilities in each student, and their full flourishing is at the heart of all its endeavours.* (Catholic Education Melbourne 2015).

The concept of diversity recognises individual differences in our students and encompasses acceptance through respecting that each person is unique and inherently valued. School policies and practices are based on core values that support inclusion and these are widely known and understood and evident. Children and adults are respected, provided with multiple, diverse opportunities for full participation so that all can thrive and succeed.

### **Building a culture of learning together**

Catholic education privileges the development of quality interpersonal relationships for all members of the school community. Each school is encouraged to create a positive climate that reflects a community of faith, knowledge and service, and promotes a common spirit of trust along with an acceptance of all. By cultivating attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that contribute towards building a positive school community, the richness afforded by individuality is harnessed and diversity can be truly celebrated.

### **Honouring equitable access and opportunity for all**

Catholic schools are committed to providing quality education, delivered through a respect for, and appreciation of, difference. Educators are called to meet the diverse needs of all learners. These needs can be complex and are met through the provision of equitable practices that recognise an entitlement to responding to difference. Through the appreciation that every person has different strengths we realise the opportunity for growth and contribution in all. Ultimately, the goal of inclusivity is that we are teaching all children and youth to become engaged, effective and participating members of society.

# Resources

## What resources are available to support Learning Diversity in a Catholic school?

- *CECV Intervention Framework* (CECV 2015; an updated version is scheduled for release in 2017)
- *Student Learning Adjustment Strategy* (CEM 2016c)
- *A Guide to Selecting an Intervention* (CEM 2016a)
- United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN General Assembly 1989)
- *Disability and Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015* (Education Council 2015)
- Yarra Healing website [www.yarrahealing.catholic.edu.au](http://www.yarrahealing.catholic.edu.au)
- Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013–2018
- *CECV Whole-School Approaches to Positive Student Behaviour* (CECV 2016)
- Catholic Education Melbourne *Guidelines for Behaviour Support* (CEM 2016b)
- Gifted Handbook
- OnLine Training Australia website [www.oltaustralia.net](http://www.oltaustralia.net)
- OLSEL website [www.olsel.catholic.edu.au](http://www.olsel.catholic.edu.au)
- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL 2014)
- Victorian Institute of Teaching.

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# Acknowledgments

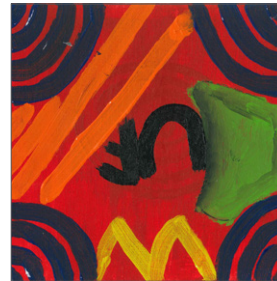
This document has been developed as part of the *Horizons of Hope, Education Framework* publication series. Catholic Education Melbourne wishes to acknowledge the following schools and students who have contributed artwork to support the development of this *Horizons of Hope Foundation Statement: Learning Diversity in a Catholic School* publication.



*Allelulia*  
**Kiera, Year 6**  
St Brendan's School,  
Somerville



*The Resurrection*  
**Adam, Year 7**  
Padua College, Tyabb



*Untitled*  
**Wesley, Year 8**  
Parade College, Preston



*Andre's Journey*  
**Andre, Year 6**  
St Francis of Assisi, Mill Park

First published September 2017

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