



MELBOURNE  
ARCHDIOCESE  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

# ALLWAYS

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A GUIDE TO SUPPORTING  
ALL LEARNERS  
IN ALL WAYS  
ALWAYS

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# Foreword

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Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne recognise each student as a sacred creation ‘made in the image of God’ (Genesis 1: 27). Accordingly, Catholic schools embrace and celebrate diversity and difference, welcoming all members of the community as equal.

*Allways: A guide to supporting all learners, in all ways, always* has been developed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) to assist educators to put these teachings and values into practice. The guide provides an update on the needs of diverse learners today, a summary of the approach to supporting diverse learners, and highlights the learning diversity support and resources that schools can access.

*Allways* builds upon MACS’ *Horizons of Hope Foundation Statement: Learning diversity in a Catholic school* and is underpinned by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria’s (CECV) *Intervention Framework*.

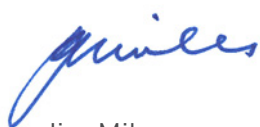
*Allways* is divided into three sections:

**Part One: All learners** outlines the current context for learning diversity in Catholic schools.

**Part Two: Always** explores the imperatives for implementing inclusive education principles and defines inclusive approaches to catering for the full range of learner diversity.

**Part Three: In all ways** outlines the assistance available to Catholic schools. It details how the Learning Diversity team partners with educators to deliver an evidence-based approach, high-quality core instruction and multi-tiered systems of support.

It is hoped that this guide will help reaffirm educators’ commitment to actively engaging all students in learning, and provide a reassuring reminder of the extensive learning diversity support available.



Jim Miles  
Executive Director  
Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

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# Introduction

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The *Allways* guide is a commitment to all learners, inspired by Catholic teachings.

As Pope Paul VI has stated (1965), 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.

Accordingly, Catholic educators seek to meet the needs of all learners,

in all ways, always; to enable every student to experience success.

*Allways* affirms Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools' (MACS) commitment to welcoming, valuing, acknowledging and actively engaging all learners across all cultural, academic, behavioural, social/emotional and physical attributes.

## MACS AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SUPPORT:

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PART ONE

# All learners



# What makes learners diverse?

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‘Learning diversity’ refers to the infinite variety of life experiences and attributes that learners bring with them to school. Their age, gender, religion, socioeconomic background, cultural background, physical and emotional attributes and cognitive abilities can all influence the way they learn.

## Physical and cognitive abilities

The attributes of learners vary and can affect their ability to participate in education. Almost one in every 10 Australian children (9.6%) are identified as having a disability (ABS 2018). The functional impact learners experience may include the need for educational adjustments to address sensory, speech and language needs, intellectual needs, physical restrictions, psychosocial conditions, the impact of head injuries, stroke and/or acquired brain injuries. Educational programs are designed to maximise participation and engagement in learning.

## Gifted and talented

Gifted and talented students have distinctly above-average intellectual, creative, social or physical abilities (Gagné 2008). The provision of reasonable adjustments optimises their growth in learning (Kronborg & Plunkett 2008).

## Culturally and linguistically diverse background

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) learners are those who come from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and were either born overseas or have one parent born overseas. CALD students speak one or more languages other than English. Teaching strategies must be responsive to the learning strengths and needs of these learners (AITSL 2018).

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Learners from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have a rich culture that educators in Catholic schools celebrate. We are inclusive and respectful of all Indigenous Australians throughout their learning journey. Teaching strategies are responsive and equitable and promote the ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education.

## Social/emotional needs

The social and emotional needs of students – such as those related to autism spectrum disorder, anxiety and selective mutism – should be understood in order to provide opportunities to harness strengths, interests and abilities. Understanding a learner’s social/emotional needs and their impact on learning and engagement can positively affect a learner’s educational outcomes. Providing reasonable adjustments to support learner participation improves academic performance and skills, while reducing stress and other factors which can negatively affect learning.

# Data on learning diversity in schools

Data shows almost one in every five Australian students (19.9%) are included in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), with 3.2% of students receiving substantial adjustments and 1.6% being provided with extensive adjustments (ACARA 2019).

Schools continue to work with many students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. One in every 11 children aged 0–14 were born overseas, with 66% of those overseas-born children coming from mainly non-English-speaking countries (AIHW 2020). Many more children (25.3% of all children) speak a language other than English at

home (AEDC 2018). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, meanwhile, continue to fall behind others in terms of learning outcomes (see Figure 1).

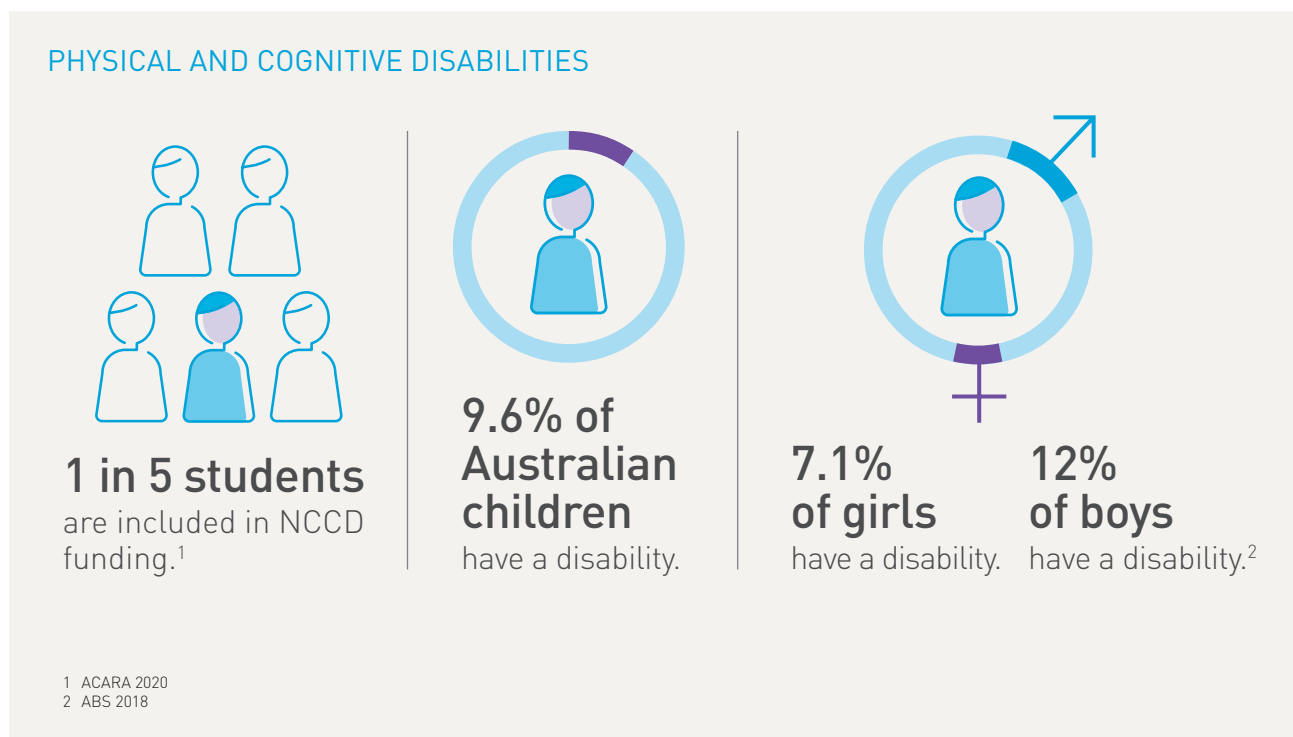
Social/emotional needs are growing. Victoria reported an 11.5% increase in clients of child and adolescent mental health services in 2017–18 (DHHS 2018) and as many as 5.6% of children entering school today are at high risk of clinically significant behavioural and emotional problems (DHHS 2019).

Mental health needs are also on the rise. Between 2013 and 2017, Australian schools saw a 5.4% annual increase in enrolments of students

with mental health needs (NSW DET 2020). Research shows that 50% of mental disorders develop before the age of 14 (Kessler et al. 2005) and one in seven children aged 4–17 years will experience a mental health condition in any given year (Lawrence et al. 2015).

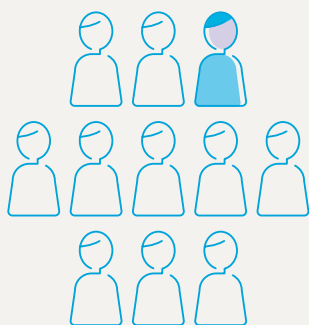
The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder has been revised upwards (by 40%) in recent years, with one in 70 Australians now believed to experience the disorder (ASA 2018), and 45% of children on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) experiencing autism (Productivity Commission 2017).

FIGURE 1: LEARNING DIVERSITY NEEDS





## CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUND



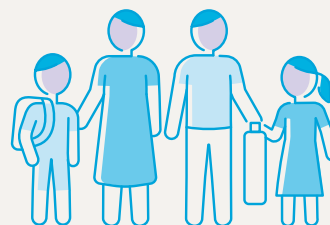
**1 in every 11 children**

were born overseas.<sup>3</sup>



**18% of Australian children**

learn English as an additional language.<sup>4</sup>



**25% of children**

come from a refugee and migrant background.<sup>5</sup>

## CECV ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS: NAPLAN DATA 2019

NAPLAN results:  
students exceeding  
minimum standard for  
Year 5 (band 4)

**93.6%**

98.0%

Year 7 reading  
(mean scale score)

**525.52**

555.85

School attendance  
(major cities)

**84.2%**

92.3%

School attendance  
(inner regional)

**89.6%**

91.4%

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students  
■ Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Source: CECV NAPLAN data supplied by ACARA

## SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL NEEDS



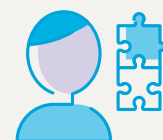
**1 in 7 Victorian children**

have mental health needs.<sup>6</sup>



**5.6% of children entering school**

are at high risk of behavioural and emotional problems.<sup>7</sup>



**45% of children**

on the National Disability Insurance Scheme have autism.<sup>8</sup>

3 AIHW 2020  
4 AEDC 2018

5 MYAN 2016  
6 Lawrence et al. 2015

7 DHHS 2018  
8 Productivity Commission 2017



PART TWO

# Always



# Supporting all learners at all times

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Catholic schools' inclusive pedagogy upholds the rights of all students to be welcomed, valued, acknowledged and actively engaged in education.

This approach is underpinned by Catholic teachings, educational and professional responsibilities and the well-established benefits of universal education.

## Catholic teachings

Catholic teachings instruct followers to celebrate diversity and see each student as a sacred creation. As such, Catholic schools value the dignity, differences, strengths and infinite possibilities in all learners.

'Unity ... involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one...' Pope Francis has said (2014). 'It means knowing how to listen, to accept differences with complete respect ...'

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) echoes this sentiment, stating that every child has a right to education. According to the human rights model of disability, it is the barriers within the community and society – rather than personal impairments – which are responsible for excluding people with disabilities (UNCRPD 2016).

## Educational responsibility

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (the Act), the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) (the Standards), the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (Cth) (the Regulation) and the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) reporting requirements outline responsibilities for educators.

The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability.

The Standards require that all schools:

- ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as others
- make 'reasonable adjustments' for students to enable their access and participation
- provide 'reasonable adjustments' in consultation with students and/or associates such as parents, guardians or carers.

The Regulation requires that schools report via the NCCD on:

- the number of students with disability
- the level of adjustment they receive.

“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)

# Supporting all learners at all times

(continued)

## Professional responsibility for teachers

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guides the professional learning and practice of teachers. It explicitly outlines the elements of high-quality, effective teaching required to improve educational outcomes for all learners.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching stresses the importance of supporting diverse learners through registration, regulation and the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct.

Teachers are required to build their capacity to teach learners with diverse needs in order to maintain their registration – professional learning requirements stipulate that all teachers must complete an annual professional development component focused on meeting the diverse needs of students.

## Universal educational benefits

There is clear and consistent evidence that supporting diverse learners through inclusive education practices delivers life-long benefits for all students (Hehir 2016).

Inclusive education systems have been shown to deliver academic (Hehir et al. 2014), social and emotional benefits (Katz and Mirenda 2002), increased post-secondary education placement (Baer et al 2011), improved employment outcomes and greater independence (Wagner et al. 1993).

Research shows that implementing inclusive learning practices also improves teachers' professional satisfaction and reduces workload (Katz 2014).

Ultimately, the goal of inclusivity is that we are teaching all children and youth to become engaged, effective and participating members of society.

(CEM 2017)



# Principles

Catholic educators are committed to supporting all learners at all times. This does not mean that every learner gets the same support, but that every learner receives the support they require to optimise growth, success, access and participation. Adjustments and support should be dynamic, research-based and at the point of need.

## Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is recommended as a set of principles that provide a blueprint for creating inclusive environments, instructional goals, pedagogical practices, materials and assessments that can be customised and adjusted for individual needs. UDL is an approach to curriculum that minimises barriers and optimises learning for all students.

Adjustments can be designed flexibly to support diverse learning needs inclusive of curriculum design, environmental factors, social and sensory needs. For more information see the *CECV Intervention Framework* listed in the key resources section at the end of this guide.

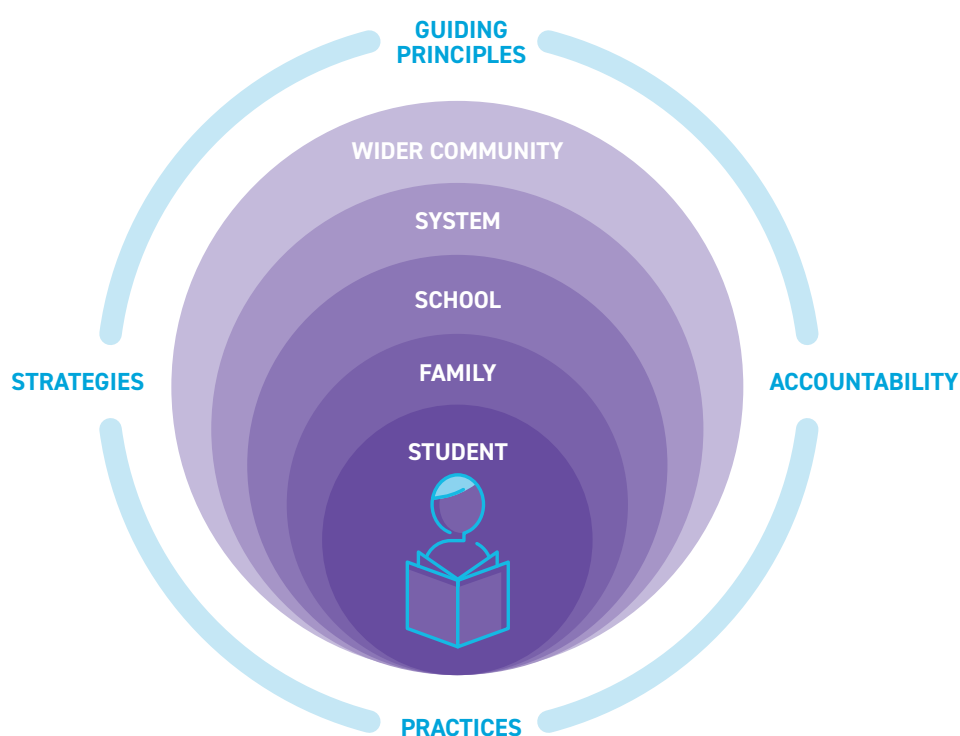
## Intervention Framework

The CECV has developed an Intervention Framework which articulates the guiding principles, accountability mechanisms, practices and strategies that need to be considered in order to optimise learning outcomes for all students.

Students' needs sit at the heart of the Intervention Framework, with families, schools, the Catholic education system and the wider community supporting the delivery of optimal support.

This approach is outlined in Figure 2 and detailed in the *CECV Intervention Framework*.

FIGURE 2: INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK





PART THREE

# In all ways



# About the Learning Diversity team

There are many ways Catholic schools can partner with the Learning Diversity team to implement the Intervention Framework, deliver high-quality instruction and provide multi-tiered systems of support.

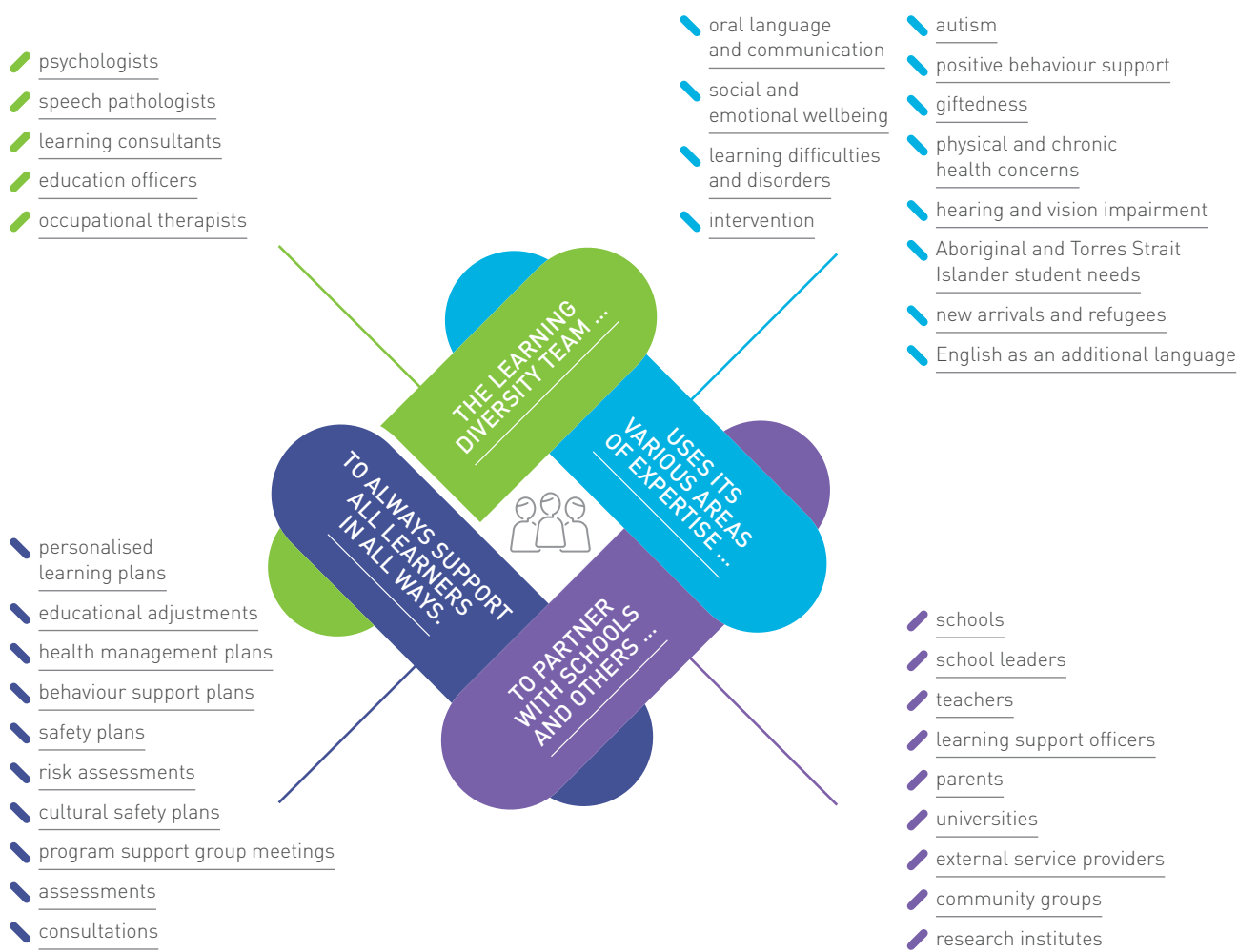
The Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Learning Diversity team provides consultancy and advice to schools to support all learners, in all ways.

The team is committed to innovation and evidence-based practice and works with schools to design and inform targeted interventions. Schools can draw on the expertise of psychologists, speech pathologists, education officers

and learning consultants specialised in learning, autism, behaviour, giftedness, physical/chronic health concerns, hearing, vision, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, new arrivals and refugees.

The many ways the Learning Diversity team works closely with schools are outlined in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: ALL WAYS: HOW THE LEARNING DIVERSITY TEAM WORKS CLOSELY WITH SCHOOLS



# Multi-tiered systems of support

Catholic schools implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to ensure the needs of all students are identified and met across the domains of health and wellbeing, behaviour and learning. Schools consult with families and establish processes that support the implementation of MTSS informed by data and evidence-based instructional practices.

**The first tier of support – universal quality instruction for all** – involves screening and academic and pro-social supports for all students.

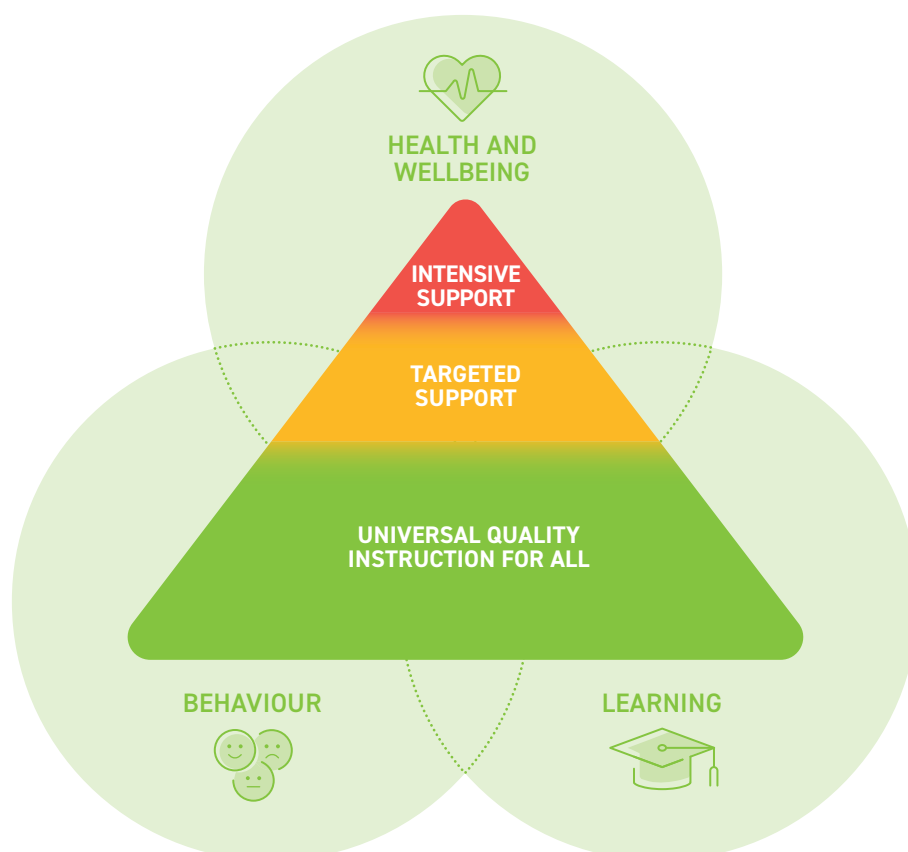
**The second tier – targeted support** – focuses on specific cohorts of students who need more explicit and targeted support. It involves completing targeted assessments and providing additional evidence-based supports.

**The final tier – intensive support** – involves more specialised assessments and individualised, targeted intervention.

As depicted in Figure 4, the three tiers are not discrete and separate, but fluid. Educational adjustments occur across all tiers and teachers can be supported by the Learning Diversity team.

Multi-tiered systems of support are a continuous improvement framework that links data and instruction. The intervention process, which is described next, provides details to guide the data collection and program planning processes and is informed by the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Please see the key resources section of this guide for more information on RTI and UDL.

FIGURE 4: MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT





# The intervention process

The intervention process focuses on student outcomes that are embedded in teacher practice. It values research, evidence-based practices, collaboration with families and data-driven instruction that are integrated into the culture and operations of a school. The Learning Diversity team helps schools implement a five-step intervention process for supporting improved learning.

## STEP 1: Identification (who is at risk?)

Schools collect quality information from a range of sources at enrolment and all points of transition to develop a shared understanding of each and every student. Ongoing comprehensive screening and assessment processes are essential to identify students with diverse needs. The Functional Needs Assessment (FNA) Profile offers schools a process to support students with diverse learning needs. For more information see the key resources section of this guide.

## STEP 2: Targeted assessment (why are they at risk?)

Students with diverse learning needs may require more specific targeted assessment data to inform the development and delivery of the most appropriate learning pathway.

## STEP 3: Data analysis (what is the risk?)

Data-driven, decision-making processes are applied within inclusive school practices to accommodate the learning needs of identified students.

## STEP 4: Targeted teaching (what is the school doing?)

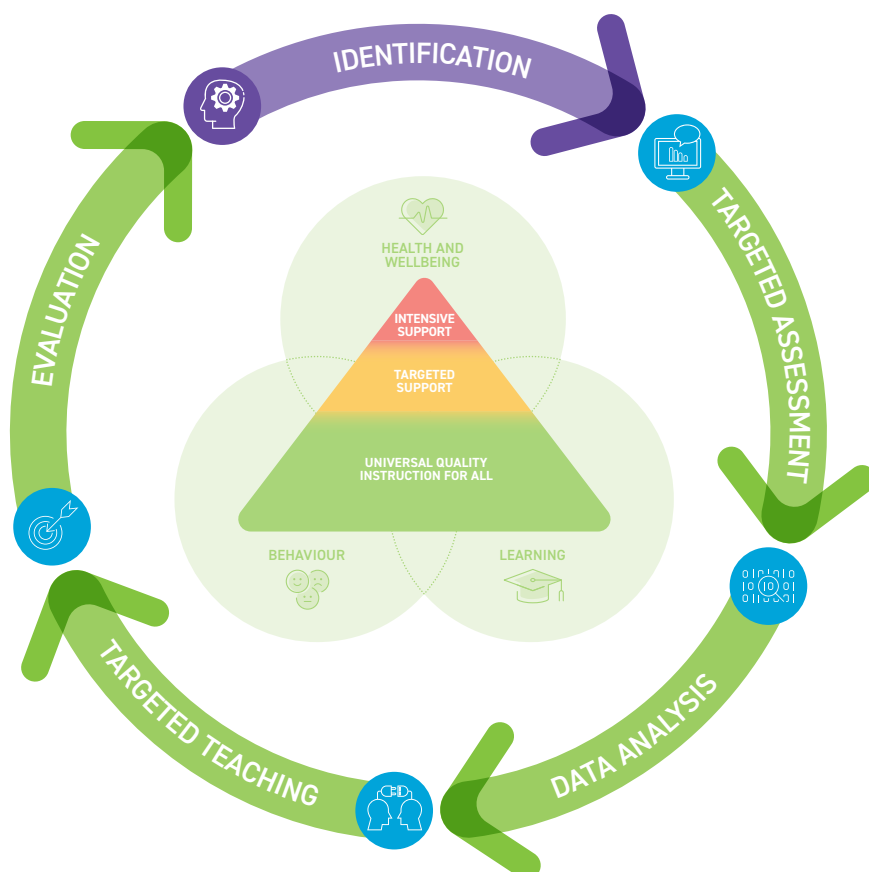
With appropriate data-driven decision-making processes, schools design learning interventions and adjustments that are matched to identified needs. Effective access to the curriculum is provided in a way that targets development and progression for every student.

## STEP 5: Evaluation (is it working?)

Student progress as a response to an intervention is evaluated, as is the integrity, fidelity and implementation of the intervention or adjustments themselves. The focus is on the rate of student progress over time, regardless of the starting point. Schools rigorously track the progress of all students and adapt targeted instruction and adjustments to ensure growth.

As shown in Figure 5, the intervention process is underpinned by MTSS.

FIGURE 5: THE INTERVENTION PROCESS AND MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT





ST. ALOYSIUS  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
QUEENSLAND

# Key resources

An extensive range of materials has been developed to help Catholic schools support the needs of all learners. Below is a list of key resources to help schools get started.



## READ

### Horizons of Hope Foundation Statement: Learning diversity in a Catholic school

This Foundation Statement situates Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools' (MACS) commitment to supporting learning diversity within the Catholic ethos and articulates the guiding principles in relation to learning diversity. *Horizons of Hope* is available at <https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/Our-Schools/Curriculum-Learning-Programs/Horizons-of-Hope/Learning-Diversity.aspx>.

### CECV Intervention Framework

The *CECV Intervention Framework* outlines the guiding principles, accountability, strategies and practices that need to be considered in order to optimise learning outcomes for all students. The framework is available at [www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Publications](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Publications).

### Functional Needs Assessment Profile

The Functional Needs Assessment (FNA) Profile offers schools a process to support students with diverse learning needs. It is a tool designed to identify the needs of students and is integral to the intervention process. The functional areas included are: communication, learning (cognitive), literacy, numeracy, gifted, physical/health, social/emotional, behaviour, vision and hearing. The FNA Profile can be found on the Catholic Education Victoria Network (CEVN) website at <https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au>.



## WATCH

### CECV Intervention Framework Professional Learning Modules 1–7

These modules are based on the *CECV Intervention Framework*. Modules 1 and 2 explore the importance of a culture of inclusive practices and the methodologies that underpin the framework. Modules 3–7 deal with the five-step intervention process. Each module is accompanied by an activity book. Access to modules is available at <https://sites.google.com/cem.edu.au/the-intervention-framework/home> when schools undertake CECV Intervention Framework professional learning.

### CECV Intervention Framework Illustrations of Practice

These videos illustrate the principles explored in the seven professional learning modules. They feature practical advice and insights from MACs educators with experience in implementing the Intervention Framework. Access to the modules is available here <https://sites.google.com/cem.edu.au/the-intervention-framework/home> when schools undertake CECV Intervention Framework professional learning.



## VISIT

### MACS Multi-Tiered Systems of Support website

This website provides educators with extensive tools and resources for supporting oral language, reading, numeracy, behaviour and cultural diversity. Visit <https://mtss.education/>.

### Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) website

This is the basis of the CECV's disability funding model. More information about the NCCD can be found at [www.nccd.edu.au](http://www.nccd.edu.au).

### CAST website

Visit [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org) to explore the Universal Design for Learning framework.

### RTI Action Network website

For an overview of the Response to Intervention model, visit [www.rtinetwork.org](http://www.rtinetwork.org).



## CONTACT

For more information, please contact your Learning Consultant – Diversity at Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools or one of the four regional offices.



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## Conclusion

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Many factors influence the way a student learns: physical and cognitive abilities and disabilities, cultural and linguistic background, socioeconomic background and social/emotional needs.

Catholic educators have a moral, legal and theological obligation to ensure that all learners are welcomed, valued, acknowledged and actively engaged in education. That means removing barriers to learning for all students, identifying those who may need more or different support, and working as a team to provide evidence-based, data-driven interventions.

The Learning Diversity team helps schools deliver this support in a range of different ways and offers the expertise of regional teams of psychologists, speech pathologists, learning consultants and external partners.

When schools recognise that all students learn differently, and take steps to allow them to succeed, students' opportunities expand exponentially. This is true not only in each student's immediate academic context, but across every aspect of their personal development, wellbeing and their entire life trajectory.

Catholic schools are encouraged to work with the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Learning Diversity team to support **all learners, in all ways, always.**

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