La Trobe Rural Health School, Living with Disability Research Centre, & School of Education (Bendigo)

Development of options to enable specialist schools to become "Centres of Expertise" to support local mainstream schools to implement inclusive education.

Report

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Executive Summary

AIM

The project described in this report addresses the aim to "Develop options to enable specialist schools to become 'Centres of Expertise' to support local mainstream schools to implement inclusive education".

METHODS

Multiple strategies combining quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented to ensure that the Options developed reflected (a) contemporary evidence, relevant national and international initiatives, and current models and approaches used in some Victorian schools, and (b) stakeholder input and co-design. Five activities were completed within a 5-month period (November 2016-April 2017). These are summarized in the following sections.

DESKTOP REVIEW: GREY AND PUBLISHED LITERATURE

Systematic searches of grey literature and published academic articles (mostly published since 2010) addressing inclusion, special schools, and education of students with disability were conducted. Searches yielded 79 documents comprising legislation, government inquiries, submissions, and commissioned reports; and 92 academic articles, including 70 empirical studies. Document summaries were used to develop a timeline of legislation and policy reform (Appendix A), and evidence reviews. Results indicated that legislation and policy reform has been informed by human rights conventions. Still, there is evidence of problems in implementing inclusive practices in Mainstream Schools. The role of Specialist Schools has evolved since deinstitutionalization, with a recent focus on developing them as centres of expertise. Evidence reviews indicate promising practices that can be implemented by harnessing Specialist School expertise (e.g., collaborative consultation, co-teaching, effective use of Education Support staff, leadership, and enhanced parent and student peer involvement).

CURRENT PRACTICES OF VICTORIAN SPECIALIST SCHOOLS

An on-line survey was completed by 84 Victorian Specialist School principals. Most (75%) reported currently providing support to other schools. These supports were varied in nature, but mostly included professional development, as well as peer support and opportunities to access resources or observe teaching. There was a general willingness to provide such supports, but efforts were mostly ad-hoc, rather than systematic.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The experiences of Specialist and Mainstream School personnel, and parents in supporting students with disabilities were explored through interviews of 32 stakeholders (18 from Specialist Schools and 10 from Mainstream Schools). They were parents (*n*=3), principals

(*n*=3), assistant principals (*n*=4), lead or specialist teachers (*n*=11), consultants or outreach teachers (*n*=6), Education Support (ES) staff (*n*=3), and allied health/ psychology professionals (*n*=2).

Overall, the data analysis provided a needs assessment, whereby difficulties faced by schools and parents appeared related to funding gaps, difficulties meeting varied student needs, lack of teacher expertise and/or confidence, and a reliance on ES staff, who themselves were seeking opportunities to develop the skills required to support students with disabilities. Many practices that result in sharing expertise and resources were evident, which appeared to be a two-way process. Specialist Schools could and were playing a key role in building the capacity of mainstream staff. Systematising, extending and resourcing current practices, strengthening relationships between schools and with parents, and strong leadership, were indicated as key to supporting inclusive education.

CO-DESIGN OF OPTIONS

Stakeholders came together in a 1-day forum to co-design the options. There were 33 attendees: 14 principals/ assistant principals (9 from Specialist, 5 from Mainstream Schools), 9 teachers (Specialist Schools), 5 specialist support consultants/ teachers (4 from Specialist, 1 from Mainstream), 2 allied health professionals (Specialist Schools) and 3 parents (two with children in Mainstream, and one with a child in a Mainstream and another in a Specialist School). Attendees were provided with the Legislation and Policy Timeline (Appendix A), and summaries of the evidence review and interview analyses. Attendees worked in groups to develop draft options. The researchers refined and organized options according to five categories.

ACCEPTABILITY AND FEASIBILITY SURVEY

The extent to which each of the co-designed options were considered acceptable and feasible by a wider sample of stakeholders from both Specialist and Mainstream Schools was determined using an online survey (Qualtrics) in which respondents rated each option. A total of 142 surveys were completed by parents (4 mothers, 1 father), principals/ assistant principals (*n*=51), teachers (*n*=44), allied health professionals and staff in specialist roles (*n*=26). Most school personnel were from Specialist Schools (71%) and in metropolitan Melbourne (71%), with 18% in regional and 10% in rural Victoria.

Overall, the options were rated as moderately to highly acceptable and feasible, but with moderate to high resource intensity (i.e., resources needed to implement the option). There were options for each category that received high rankings- see Appendix B.

KEY FINDINGS: IDENTIFIED OPTIONS

The activities of this project resulted in the identification of eight options, within five categories. There was varying support for these options from the grey and academic literature and the stakeholder interview analysis (see Appendix C).

A. Options for configuring the relationship between mainstream and specialist schools.

- Collaborative networks are formed based on location, comprising one or more Specialist Schools that share and exchange expertise and resources with a number of Mainstream Schools.

B. Options for co-ordinating demands and matching needs to expertise.

- Each participating Specialist School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to liaise with Mainstream Schools; each participating Mainstream School has a dedicated "connector" position, the role of which is to link the school with the Specialist School.

C. Options for ensuring necessary skills and leadership abilities.

- Specialist School Teachers providing expert support to Mainstream Schools have completed professional development in particular areas of expertise, and have experience and been supported (e.g., mentoring) to develop leadership and other skills needed to provide the following supports: face-to-face coaching, support for experiential learning, the provision of in-class intensive supports to assist teachers of students with complex issues; and communicating with senior school staff.

D. Options for building mainstream capacity.

- Education Support Staff are given full access to capacity building opportunities, including professional development, observing practice in Specialist Schools and in-classroom consultations with Specialist School staff.
- All teachers in Mainstream Schools meet minimum professional development requirements that relate to the needs of any student with disability in the school.
- Professional development is developed and delivered in flexible and varied modes that incorporate both on-line and face-face components.
- All Mainstream School teachers within a network or partnership meet a condition of employment of having completed a placement within a specialist setting as a pre-service teacher.

E. Options for achieving the transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability.

- Specialist Schools work collaboratively with Mainstream Schools to develop flexible learning outcomes for students.

The options reflect previous models and practices implemented in Australia and internationally, with varying support from research evidence. Stakeholders perceived the options to be resource-intensive, especially in terms of budget allocation and staffing required to ensure the implementation of any option did not result in additional work for individual staff members, which could overburden them or detract from their core work. These were perceptions only in that the project did not include any attempt to cost options.

Although the options emerged from strong stakeholder involvement, certain groups were not well-represented: parents, ES staff and allied health professionals; and more Specialist than Mainstream School personnel participated. Effective communication and consultation with these groups are warranted to reduce possible implementation risks. Dissemination of this report, either in its entirety or in part, may mitigate against these risks.

Introduction

The Victorian Government has committed to deliver recommendations from a review of the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) (1) as part of its agenda for *Inclusive education for all students with disabilities and additional needs* (2). The project described in this report addresses Recommendation 7: "Develop options to enable specialist schools to become 'Centres of Expertise' to support local mainstream schools to implement inclusive education" (1).

The review of the PSD was guided by a definition of inclusion encompassing the following principles: (a) regardless of the nature or severity of their disability, children are enabled to learn alongside other children in their local community through reasonable adjustments; (b) general education settings welcome all students, regardless of ability or disability; and (c) children with disabilities share educational experiences with their peers, although they may pursue different, but appropriate learning outcomes (1). These principles reflect the human rights of children with disability to have the same opportunities as their peers without disability to obtain a quality education in a mainstream setting, articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006). These definitional features of inclusion and human rights principles were adopted in this project.

Methods

Multiple strategies combining quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented to ensure that the Options developed reflected (a) contemporary evidence, relevant national and international initiatives, and current models and approaches used in some Victorian schools, and (b) stakeholder input and co-design. Five activities were completed within a 5-month period (November 2016-April 2017):

1. Desktop review of recent grey and published literature addressing inclusive education and the role of Specialist Schools.
2. A survey of members of the Principals' Association of Specialist Schools to determine current practices in Victorian Specialist Schools in supporting Mainstream Schools in the education of students with disability.
3. Interviews of stakeholders from Specialist and Mainstream Schools to explore experiences of supporting students with disabilities in their own and other schools, current needs, and possibilities.
4. A forum of stakeholders from Specialist and Mainstream Schools with the aim of co-desiging initial drafts of Options.
5. A survey of Specialist and Mainstream Schools regarding the acceptability, feasibility and resource needs of the Options that emerged from the previous activiites.

In order to ensure that the project was rigorous in the methods used and met ethical and privacy standards, an application was submitted to and approved by the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee for all project activities involving participants. Approval was also obtained from the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Desktop Review: Grey and Published Literature

Systematic on-line searches were conducted of the grey literature - i.e., various document types produced by government, academics and industry published in forms not controlled commercially (3) - and the academic published literature. The systematic search of the grey literature began with key word searches of Pandora, Google and the database A+ Education for sources addressing the topics of inclusion, special schools, and education of students with disability (using the search terms special* schools, inclusion and education), which were available in the public domain. Reference lists of included reports were checked for further documents that addressed the topic and were available on-line. In addition, requests for relevant reports were made of Australian experts in the field. We focused on documents published since 2010, with the addition of previous relevant legislative, policy and inquiry documents. This search yielded 79 documents comprising legislation, government inquiries, submissions, and commissioned reports.

Systematic on-line searches of academic papers published in journals or available on-line from January 2010 – December 2016 were conducted in the databases ERIC and A+ Education to address the following questions:

1. What are the components of successful models of inclusive education?
2. What are the key factors that impede or facilitate theories or models of inclusive education?
3. What is known about the outcomes in schools in which these models or theories have been implemented?

These questions enabled a search for literature that documented Specialist School models and potential ways in which these schools could support inclusion in mainstream education. Search terms used were inclusive education AND behavior support AND disability AND (models OR barriers OR positive), which yielded 746 citations in the ERIC database and 85 additional citations in the A+ Education database. These citations were each reviewed and screened, following which 92 were judged to meet inclusion criteria. The search of the academic literature yielded 92 documents, comprising 9 issues papers, 13 descriptions of models, and 70 empirical studies.

All documents from both grey and academic literature searches were summarized according to the following themes: legislation and policy reform, the evolving role of Specialist Schools, models and practices to support educational inclusion (with subthemes collaborative consultation, co-teaching, the role of ES Staff, promising practices, parent involvement and the role of student peers). The 70 empirical studies were further classified according to the designs used: most were qualitative (*n*=39, relying largely on focus groups and interviews, as well as some observations), with quantitative methods employed in 18 studies (largely surveys, but some studies included observational data), and mixed methods in 13 studies (often combining survey, observational and/or interview data as part of case studies). There

were no studies in which specific practices or approaches were evaluated using experimental research methods (i.e., enabling the attribution of cause-effect).

LEGISLATION AND POLICY REFORM

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 (4) sets out the requirements for education providers to ensure that students with disability have access and opportunities to participate in education on the same basis as other students. It is underpinned by the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 (Commonwealth), thereby legally obligating education providers to meet the needs of all students in schools, including those with disabilities, through practices and supports, such as the implementation of reasonable accommodations. These legal obligations have been further strengthened through the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act (2006), the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (2010), the Victorian Disability Act (2006) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (5), which reflect commitment to the human rights of people with disability, as detailed in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD, 2006), ratified by Australia in 2008. Since then, a number of policy reforms have followed reports that children with disability continue to experience educational exclusion, often with long term and serious consequences. These reports have included the Victorian Auditor-General's Report (VAGR) (6), and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (7) and the Children with Disability Australia (8) submissions to a Senate inquiry (9) into access to real learning for students with disabilities. These documents demonstrate continued concerns about children with disabilities missing out on equal and inclusive education, despite legislation and policy initiatives. The review of the PSD, in drawing on stakeholder consultations and an on-line survey, resulted in further evidence of continued obstacles to schools building an inclusive culture (1).

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF SPECIALIST SCHOOLS

Specialist Schools have played a significant role in the education of students with disabilities since deinstitutionalisation (10). As greater attention has been paid to inclusive education in Mainstream Schools, the role of Specialist Schools as part of a continuum of education options for children with disabilities has come under scrutiny (11). The Salamanca Declaration Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education of 1994, to which 92 international governments were signatories, suggested a primary role for Specialist Schools as being the provision of resources and support to Mainstream Schools (12). It was noted in the Salamanca Declaration that these schools, as a result of their high cost and resource needs, were not viable for low income countries, which needed to rely on strengthening Mainstream Schools to make reasonable adjustments to support the varied needs of students with disabilities. Specialist Schools were acknowledged to have expertise in educating students with particular needs, such as the Deaf who use sign language and children with severe and/or multiple disabilities.

Concerns have been raised in response to suggestions for fewer or a re-configured role for Specialist Schools. These have included the potential loss of expertise found in these schools (13), while the adoption of strategies developed through decades of research in special education settings, including Universal Design for Learning, Response to Intervention, and Positive Behaviour Supports, in inclusive settings has been acknowledged (14, 15). There has

also been some argument that students experience poorer outcomes if educated in inclusive settings, but there is disagreement about whether evidence relating to student outcomes is sufficient to support either segregated or inclusive education (15-17). Of course differences in how and the extent to which inclusion is implemented, both within and across countries, poor attitudes and preparation of teachers, limited or ad-hoc classroom supports, varying involvement and collaboration with families, and lack of an agreed measure of inclusion have hampered attempts to compare inclusive to segregated education (15, 17).

Within the United States (US), multi-tiered supports based on student need, rather than disability category, have been argued to guide *how* to enable students to access the curriculum, rather than focusing on the *place* of support (i.e., in segregated vs mainstream settings) (14). Tier 1 supports include universal design of curriculum to address individualised needs within the classroom (contrasting to a one-size fits all approach), Tier 2 supports may be specific adaptations, such as providing more time for tasks or incorporating assistive technology, and Tier 3 supports may be intensive and specific or individualised instruction (14, 19). Although Specialist Schools have been considered best placed to provide Tier 3 supports, Sailor (14) argued that, along with Tiers 1 and 2, they can be provided in any setting.

Recommendation 7 of the PSD review addresses the potential to harness the expertise of Specialist Schools in building the capacity of Mainstream Schools to meet the needs of students with disability. In particular, teachers with special education qualifications and experience in teaching students with varying types and levels of disability appear well placed to provide professional development, consultation and peer supports to Mainstream School teachers (1).

The ways in which special and mainstream education providers come together to facilitate inclusion have varied (Ferguson, 2008), although some form of supportive relationship between the two usually has been present. In the United Kingdom (UK) for example, a pilot study of School Federations included cases of mainstream and one or more Special or Specialist Schools entering into Federations (with varying levels of legal formality) (20). These Federations had inclusion as a key goal, but evaluation was largely anecdotal rather than empirical. Other international examples include a long term project in Armenia that began in 1990s, in which three Specialist Schools provided supports to five Mainstream Schools (21). Key features of this project were regular communication between schools and parents, and community involvement; ensuring both planned and ad-hoc supports were available; setting up professional development learning communities; employing paid rather than voluntary classroom support personnel; the conduct of student assessments by specialists; forming strong collaborative and multidisciplinary teaching teams across schools; and strong commitment by leaders and teachers. Evaluation using multi-methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, and observations) indicated positive outcomes, with the Specialist School evolving into a resource centre (21).

In Australia, the Commonwealth funded initiative, More Supports for Students with Disabilities (MSSD), from 2012 to 2014 (22), resulted in demonstration projects featuring Specialist School supports to Mainstream Schools. These are summarised in the following:

- Developing a regional Special Education Network Centre (SA): a skilled Special Education teacher was employed as a co-ordinator, with follow-up positions to provide direct support to teachers and students planned as a future stage(23).
- Kimberley Region Support Centre (WA): an expert provided a learning support role to teachers, another supported students (24).
- Leadership development in Special Schools (Vic): principals of Specialist Schools were supported to assist colleagues in neighbourhood schools (i.e., the Bastow program) (25).
- Special Schools as Centres of Expertise (NSW): local networks of Mainstream Schools were formed with Specialist Schools for sharing knowledge, and providing peer support and collaboration (26). This project expanded to over 100 Specialist Schools, with a plan to allocate one learning and support teacher to each mainstream school (27-29).
- Distinctive Schools Model (WA) – special schools provided expertise and project leadership through webinars, group consultation, Individual Partner Schools consultation, group in-person consultation, and on-line resources (30).
- Supporting Students with Autism (Vic): partnerships were formed between Specialist Schools and key agencies to provide Autism Inclusion Support Co-ordinators and Autism Coaches (school based), allowing for collegial support, collaboration and resource sharing. Essential were a culture of coaching and leadership support (31). This model evolved into Autism Connect (32).
- Katandra (Vic): This Specialist School enrols children with intellectual disability, engagement difficulties and behaviour problems; the School provides staff coaching and support resources to Mainstream Schools (1).

The MSSD reports indicated positive developments, but were largely anecdotal. Some programs have continued (29) or evolved into ongoing programs (31, 32). Positive outcomes have included sharing expertise across Specialist and Mainstream Schools, extending benefits to whole school practices (31), and improving student achievement levels (30). The Katandra (Victoria) evaluation demonstrated that students were supported to stay in mainstream settings (1), while an evaluation of Autism Connect indicated improved capacity of mainstream teachers to develop and implement strategies to support students with autism, as well as building connections with autism specialists (32). Potential problems noted in reports included high set up costs for resource centres (23), the potential for specialist consultants to be diverted to classroom teaching (24).

MODELS AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

Collaborative Consultation

Collaborative consultation has been described as a model of inclusive education wherein the classroom teacher works with a consultant both inside and outside the classroom (33). It involves “co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal” (34). Two key types of collaborators have been described in the literature: (a) learning support coaches, also referred to by a range of other names, are special education-trained professionals who may meet with students, teachers, or both (35-38); and (b) allied-health professionals (e.g., psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists) (10).

This model has been used in both primary and secondary schools, and found to be a key element in effective inclusive education (39, 40). Positive outcomes have been obtained through effective communication between the two parties (36) and when learning support coaches meet briefly on a daily basis with secondary school students (37, 38). In relation to allied health professionals as consultants, Strogilos, Lacey (10) found that collaboration is fostered when they are internal to the school, with external allied health supports found less effective. Poor experiences with collaborative-consultation have arisen when communication is poor and expectations are mismatched (36). Low implementation and poor training have been identified frequently as barriers to successful collaborative consultation (41, 42), as have lack of planning time (40, 43), and poor attitudes or support from school administrators (44).

Co-teaching

Co-teaching involves a general education and a special education teacher working together in the classroom: the general education teacher provides content expertise and the special education teacher provides expertise in adapting lessons to suit students with various needs. Unlike an ES staff member, who may be assigned to assist an individual student with a disability, using a co-teaching model, the special education teacher helps all students access the curriculum. Co-teaching has been used in mainstream schools, at primary and secondary levels (45) and found to lead to better gains for students than pull-out instruction by an allied health professional (46). Research has shown that effective collaboration through co-teaching requires collaborative preparation, provision, and evaluation (47), supports in the form of monitoring, feedback, and continual professional development (48-50), and requires planning time (49). Techniques used in co-teaching found to be effective include activation of prior knowledge, processing activities, strategy instruction, scaffolding, providing a structured environment with clear routines, and asking students to draw connections between topics to emphasize big picture learning (51).

Poor outcomes of co-teaching have arisen when the special education teacher has been used similarly to an ES staff member (49), assuming responsibility for the students with disabilities, which the generalist teacher relinquishes (51). Ashton (52) reported that the specialist may also be at risk of exploitation by being expected to put in extra hours teaching content to the students with disabilities, when s/he is not a content expert. Co-teaching has been found to have different effects on student participation at primary and secondary levels (45), which may need to be taken into consideration.

Teacher attitudes towards co-teaching (48) and how co-teachers work together have been found to be critical to success (53, 54), as has the adequate provision of collaborative planning time (43, 55). Pearl, Dieker (56) recommended that for co-teaching to be effective, no more than 30% of students in a classroom should have a disability.

The Role of Education Support Staff

Various terms have been used for staff who provide supports in the classroom, including Paraprofessional, Support Teachers, Teaching Assistant, Education/ Teacher Assistants, and Teacher's Aide (57, 58). Education Support (ES) staff is the term used in this report to align with DET. In most countries or jurisdictions, no formal qualifications are required for this role (58, 59). An exception is Italy, where ES staff have teaching qualifications and post-graduate training (57).

The international research, including in Australia (57, 59, 60), indicates that ES staff are taking on increasing responsibilities for the direct teaching of students with disability. They may have total responsibility for the students such that the student is excluded if the ES staff member is not present (16, 61) and the ES staff member may be required to remove a student who is disruptive (61). A number of models were evident in the research, but most appeared to require that the ES staff have responsibility for direct instruction of the student (10, 61). Further, they have been required to make curriculum adaptations without teacher oversight (59, 60) and to implement behaviour support programs (59). An alternative model argued to be best practice is the use of ES staff as a general resource in the classroom, freeing up the teacher to provide adjustments and supports to students with disability (58, 59).

There has been evidence of an increase in on-task behaviour and interaction with adults when a student has an ES staff member (i.e., with the ES staff but not the teacher), and if trained in evidence-based literacy support, ES staff can facilitate student outcomes (59). Students have been found to feel supported when ES staff provide discrete support and resources when needed (62), and the presence of ES staff can reduce instances of bullying (59). On the other hand, students can become stigmatised and isolated in the constant presence of an ES staff member (16, 59, 61, 63, 64), making them vulnerable to bullying when that person is not present (11, 63). The hours of direct ES staff support has been found to be associated with reduced classroom participation and social participation (64). ES staff can feel devalued, exploited and without support (59). Students can feel frustrated when ES staff lack content knowledge (61).

Barriers to effective use of ES staff include lack of training and professional development for both them and teachers (65), teachers feeling they lack skills in supporting students with disability (66), ES staff feeling they lack remuneration in line with their responsibilities or a career pathway, lack of role delineation (57), and lack of supervision and monitoring by teachers (59). Of particular concern is that ES staff, the least qualified personnel in the classroom, are being asked to work with students with the greatest need of educational expertise (58).

Practices that Enhance Educational Inclusion

The Disability Standards Education 2005 compels schools to make *reasonable adjustments* so that students with disability are treated on the same basis as other students. Walsh found in a survey of Queensland schools the following were being used: allocation of additional staff supports, alterations to lessons, physical alterations of school grounds or assigning children to physical classrooms that meet their mobility needs, low-level nursing and personal care assistance (67). MSSD projects reports have also identified the benefits of curriculum differentiation, often through the assistance of specialist teachers or allied health professionals (68, 69), and use of assistive technologies (68, 70).

A recurring theme in the literature has been that effective inclusive education requires *planning time* set aside for teachers to work collaboratively with specialists and ES staff (38, 40, 42, 43, 51, 55, 69, 71, 72). Another recurring theme was that *positive collaborative relationships* need to be fostered among staff and with families (36, 73). Peer relationships for children have also been found to be critical to successful inclusion (36, 73).

Pre-service training and continuing professional development have been found to be associated with enhanced inclusive education (41, 49, 51, 72, 74-79). There appears to be a continuing belief amongst varied stakeholders that successful inclusion is conditional upon adequate resources (80).

Leadership that embraces inclusion has been found to provide an environment or school culture that fosters inclusive practices (33, 81). Principals of Specialist Schools have been involved in projects in which they provide peer support to develop leadership across network schools (e.g., Bastow) (25)

When the *whole school fosters a culture of inclusion*, students have been found to benefit not only from the practices of good teaching, but also collaborative positive peer interactions, which benefit all students (37, 38, 40).

Parent Involvement

Strong partnerships between schools and parents have been framed in policies (4, 5) and parent involvement was a key feature of one MSSD project in South Australia (82). In this project, mainstream schools entered into lead and buddy arrangements to support inclusion. Governance structures provided formal agreements with parents, while opportunities for parents to interact with each other were created through an internet café (82). Unfortunately, reports by advocacy groups suggest that parents are likely to experience frustration and marginalization in response to their efforts to have schools address their children's educational needs (7, 83). These reports indicate that parents often fund shortfalls in classroom supports, including ES staff and private allied health therapies, a practice also reported in a study by Wong, Ng (84).

Home-school partnerships have been promoted in the research literature (84, 85). Positive outcomes have included knowledge sharing with students without disabilities, closer relationships developing between teachers and parents, parents being provided with positive networking opportunities, and establishing a communication channel that enables parents to ask questions and voice concerns about policies and practices (84). Research into home-school or other forms of collaborative parent-teacher partnerships for students with disabilities has been limited and indicate they are characterized by mismatched expectations and poor communication (84-86). Wong, Ng (84), in a study in Singapore where parent support groups have been set up in most Mainstream Schools, found that parents of children with disabilities had limited involvement in school-based activities and communication with teachers was sporadic. In fact, they suggested that home-school partnerships were an "arduous task" (p. 128) for these students. Ludicke and Kortman (87) found that teachers had a fairly narrow view of the extent to which parents should be involved in their child's education, being restricted largely to monitoring homework and attending events. Parents, instead, felt they should be more involved in planning of their child's classroom activities and that communication with teachers was poor. Positive and collaborative relationships with parents appear to be further challenged when the child has complex educational needs or challenging behaviours (88).

Despite the limited research, parent involvement has been considered an essential factor in achieving sound educational outcomes for children with disability (22, 87), and can be

enhanced through better communication and increased opportunities for engagement with their child's school (85). Such involvement could go some way to ameliorate parent concerns and enlisting their assistance in addressing high rates of bullying, exclusion, restraint and seclusion experienced by their children (22, 88). Parents have also expressed concerns about their children's transitions, social wellbeing, belonging and reduced expectations by teachers (85). Solutions suggested by parents include additional resources, greater curriculum flexibility, safe or base rooms for children with autism, individual or targeted support, safe social and emotional learning, and parent involvement in educational decision making (88, 89). In some studies, parents have been found to be very supportive and appreciative of the efforts of teachers and to be realistic about their children's difficulties (85, 86, 90). They have also valued one point of contact in the school, such as a special educator or integration coordinator who understands the complex issues they face and can facilitate collaboration (90).

It appears, therefore, that parents and schools bring different perspectives to the inclusion collaboration (87, 88). Strong parent involvement and collaboration in any initiatives would appear vital to supporting change, such as how ES staff are utilized (59) or in the role of Specialist Schools (11).

Involvement of Student Peers

Younger children (primary school) have been found to be positive about students with disability in their classes (74, 80, 91), and to be ready to assist them (80). There is evidence that having students with a disability included in their class does not result in negative academic or social impacts on children without disability (91, 92), but children with disability are vulnerable to being bullied or socially isolated in mainstream classes (63, 73). Peers may react negatively to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and challenging behaviours, in particular (71). Students with disabilities require positive interactions and relationships with peers (and adults) in order to feel connected to their school community and valued at school, which mitigate against their vulnerability to bullying, abuse and being stigmatised (63).

Research has shown that placing children with disabilities amongst their peers does not guarantee social inclusion or development of positive relationships (73, 85, 91, 93). Barriers identified in research include physically isolating students from their peers through use of physical space (63) or the constant presence of ES staff (63, 64, 73), which impede opportunities for interactions. Enhancing peer relationships has been found to require the development of a positive school culture through teachers demonstrating high expectations of students with disabilities, acknowledging their achievements, providing models of pro-social behaviour (63, 73, 91), actively creating opportunities for contact (73, 93), educating peers about disability, and advocating for students with disability if bullying occurs (73, 91).

The effects of teaching peers to provide direct assistance and tutoring to students with disabilities have been studied mostly in physical education (92, 93), but Brock, Biggs (94) provide an example within academic work. Research outcomes indicate that these opportunities can build friendships (92), support students with disability to complete tasks (94), increase interactions with peers and help to build a positive class climate (93).

Current Practices of Victorian Specialist Schools

The aim of this activity was to scan Specialist Schools for current practices that support Mainstream Schools in the education of children with disabilities. A 17-item survey was developed in Qualtrics™; a link was distributed by email to all members of the Principals' Association of Specialist Schools (PASS) (*n*=85). The return rate was 98.8% (*n*=84; one school did not receive the link because of a change in principal).

Specialist School Characteristics

Student numbers ranged from 33 to 950 (*Mean* = 184; *SD* = 152). Most schools had students on the autism spectrum (94%), intellectual disability (93%), behaviour problems (83%), or physical disability (74%). About two-thirds had students with hearing impairment (67%), vision impairment (66%) or language-learning difficulties (66%); three schools (4%) reported that the largest proportion of their students had mental health problems and two schools reported that most of their students had complex health needs.

The number of teaching staff employed by schools ranged from 5 to 200 (mean = 35.6, SD = 32.9); the number of education support staff who worked directly with students ranged from 1 to 150 (mean=30.7; SD = 26). Many schools employed allied health staff, in particular speech pathologists (87%), occupational therapists (79%), physiotherapists (55%), social workers (31%) and educational psychologists (27%). Fractions (based on Effective Full Time) ranged considerably, from .05 to 5.6 across these professionals.

Providing Support to Mainstream Schools

Of the 84 schools, 63 (75%) indicated they provided support to mainstream schools. The number of schools supported ranged from 1 to 40+, but some responses were descriptive rather than numeric, including "for any school that asks for assistance," "PL [professional learning] for all in our transport zone who wish to attend, and we respond to all schools who ask for help – about 15 this year," "several on a needs basis," "all schools within the network on request – 26 average of 8 per year," "we provide support an a needs basis, support to our feeder schools/ kinders and to schools who ask, currently 1 secondary school," "Willingness to provide support wherever necessary to all schools in our network," and "Wyndham network of schools." The types of supports provided by Specialist Schools to Mainstream Schools were most frequently "Peer support through phone discussions with teachers or other mainstream school personnel" (*n* = 15), followed by "Provision of written information or resources for school personnel" (*n* = 13), "Education of peers (e.g., professional development workshops, information sessions" (*n* = 13), "In-classroom peer support" (*n*=10) and other peer professional development for peers" (*n* = 4). Also reported, but only by one or two schools, were providing opportunities for mainstream staff to visit Specialist Schools and observe classroom practices and consult with teachers, information and resource sharing, and school visits that included classroom observation.

Further information about the types of support Specialist Schools provided Mainstream Schools were provided by 11 respondents in an open comments section at the end of the survey. These were grouped into themes.

Specialist School support to Mainstream Schools is neither feasible nor "right." This theme was evident in one respondent's comments. This respondent indicated that using staff from Specialist Schools in this way detracted from their work with their own students, and supporting students in Mainstream Schools is the responsibility of DET.

Support to Mainstream Schools is provided or could be extended with further resources. One respondent stated "We are happy to support other schools to a larger degree but only if resourced to do so." Others indicated that the provision of such support was seen as important, but was costly, such as requiring back-fill of teachers when they visited Mainstream Schools, or could be extended if additional resources were available. One respondent noted the particular difficulty faced as a result of the school's rural location, resulting in additional travel costs, as well as their own difficulty in accessing allied health professionals. One respondent noted the feedback from 97% of mainstream school staff who had attended their professional development (PD) sessions to be that more PD regarding supporting students with special needs was needed. Within this theme were comments related to the need to give priority to dual enrolled students (i.e., to schools sharing students) in light of the limited resources.

Elements of successful support to Mainstream Schools. These were described in detail by two respondents. They noted sharing expertise across the schools, liaison between principals, positive partnerships and relationships, and "hands on development of more inclusive and respectful relationships between students of all abilities."

Willingness to assist. Some responses under the theme of needing additional resources indicated a general willingness to support Mainstream Schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities. One respondent simply indicated that the supports provided were "very successful." Another noted "we are always happy to help our network colleagues."

Information about the frequency with which supports were provided was reported by only 17 schools, who indicated fortnightly (n = 5), monthly (n=3), weekly (n=2) or daily (n=2), with others reporting once every few months or on an as needs basis. Also reported for these schools was the funding source for providing these supports. Most (n=10) indicated it was through PSD funding (one indicated for that allocated to mainstream students and one for their own students), one responded "we do it out of the goodness of our hearts."

When asked what Mainstream Schools contributed to the program, most of 15 respondents to this item indicated contributions that appeared in-kind (staff time, collegiate support and expertise, phone collaboration). Two respondents indicated a financial contribution, one in terms of a $500 intake placement fee, and two respondents indicated that the Mainstream School made no contribution, while another stated it was their "appreciation."

Only three respondents indicated that the school had previously provided support to Mainstream Schools, which they later ceased. Reasons were: "We currently work with children of pre- school age, we work in child care centres and kindergartens, and with a range

of specialist support programs across the state,” and “Unable to resource it and lack of interest by staff.”

Stakeholder Perspectives

The aim of this activity was to explore experiences of supporting students with disabilities in their own and other schools, current needs, and possibilities. Email invitations and participant information were sent to all PASS members, who were also asked to nominate neighbouring schools to receive this information. In addition, a list of primary and secondary Mainstream School email contacts was collated through pseudo-random selection (to capture metropolitan, regional and rural schools) from the DET Website **http://www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice/**. In total, 85 Specialist and 102 Mainstream Schools were contacted for permission to recruit parents and staff from any of the following stakeholder groups: principals and assistant principals, teachers, ES staff, allied health professionals, and parents. In total 32 stakeholders participated in interviews of 20 – 40 min duration; six were in person and 26 by telephone. Eighteen interview participants were from Specialist Schools and 10 were from Mainstream Schools (9 primary, 1 secondary), with two parents having children with disabilities in both types of school. Most interview participants were female (*n*=26), with years of teaching experience ranging from 5 to over 30. Their roles included parents (*n*=3), principals (*n*=3), assistant principals (*n*=4), lead or specialist Teachers (*n*=11), consultants or outreach teachers (*n*=6), ES staff (*n*=3), occupational therapist (*n*=1), and psychologist (*n*=1).

Interview questions addressed current needs and how to address them through Specialist School assistance. Interviews were transcribed into Word™. Analysis was guided using a framework developed by the researchers following repeat reading and preliminary analysis of three transcripts by two researchers, then discussion by four researchers. The developed framework comprised four over-arching themes, each with a number of sub-themes. This framework was then applied to all transcripts using a process of coding within NVivo 11 (QSR International). These four researchers coded each of 7-8 transcripts and one researcher conducted a check of all coding to ensure codes had been applied consistently.

The first of the four over-arching themes was “Scan of the current situation,” which captured current issues and concerns, as well as indications of promising practices occurring across Specialist and Mainstream Schools. The sub-themes and their descriptions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sub-themes and their Descriptions for Scan of the Current Situation

Sub-Theme	Description
Different funding relationship	There were different types of funding arrangements in place to support students with disability. Getting funding for an individual child was getting very difficult. For students who did receive funding, it was often used to fund individual ES staff, but it was suggested that it may be better for a continuum of supports. Parents could be unclear about how their child’s individual funding was being used, and there was some tension with schools in terms of paying for individual supports, with parents paying for specialist input, such as for an external allied health professional to work with teachers. There were examples of funding for special programs, including Autism Connect, and an Outreach Service from a Specialist School.
Diversity of students and funding gaps	Students discussed had varied needs, but there was much discussion about those who demonstrated challenging behaviours, who, in particular, challenged teachers.

Sub-Theme	Description
	Funding support, such as through Autism Connect, was directed to children with autism and challenging behaviours, a group that was growing in number across schools. However, much concern was expressed about students who fell through the funding gap because they were not "bad enough behaviourally," or had challenging behaviours, but their other disabilities were not severe enough for meeting criteria for Specialist Schools and they missed out on funding to support them in Mainstream Schools. Interviewees did talk about a diverse student group, with needs relating to autism, intellectual disability, language delays and dyslexia, emotional needs and anxiety, and cerebral palsy. While acknowledging practical reasons for funding "cut offs", they noticed apparent inequities across students in their schools. There was concern that students who needed support but missed out because of the funding gap left school early, with poor long term outcomes, or missed time at a school that could not cater for their needs.
Involvement of parents and parent choice	The need to involve parents in their child's education through participation in planning meetings and supporting their choices regarding enrolling their child in a Specialist or Mainstream School was discussed by school staff, with an apparent tendency to leave the initiation of contact and degree of involvement to each parent. School staff expressed empathy for parents and consideration of their support needs, with one Specialist School principal noting they were essential to ensure wrap around services. Reports from parents indicated a desire for open and flexible communication with teachers, and experiences of feeling left out. They stepped into the classroom to provide additional supports when it was needed by their child, to educate school staff about their child, or to advocate for their child's participation in activities or access to supports. Parents' experiences varied considerably across schools, with one noting much greater acceptance of her child, and that her needs were much better understood in a Specialist School than in Mainstream.
Lack of skills or confidence	The diversity of student needs, especially in large classes in Mainstream Schools, contributed to school staff feeling they lacked both skills and confidence in meeting the needs of students with various disabilities, especially autism and challenging behaviours, but also including other disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and dyslexia. They sometimes struggled to know how to enhance learning for these students when they also had to meet the needs of students without disability working at different levels of the curriculum. This problem could lead to negative attitudes towards students with disability in Mainstream classrooms, and a reliance on ES staff or parents to provide additional supports. It was also reported that providing teachers with help in response to their requests could turn situations around.
Need for Shared Understanding across Specialist and Mainstream Schools	There were some interviewees who had experience of both Specialist and Mainstream Schools, thereby having an understanding of both contexts. There was some discussion about understanding differences across the two contexts that could impact on how readily Mainstream Schools could implement strategies used in Specialist Schools. These included differences in class sizes, access to resources, and pressures (e.g., Mainstream Schools needing to meet benchmarks). There was also some discussion about misconceptions, such as Mainstream School staff not realising that Specialist Schools did teach academic skills or follow the Victorian Curriculum, and Specialist School staff acknowledging that sharing of strategies could go both ways or that both often had to deal with the same types of problems.
Pockets of Effective Exchanges and Other Positive Practices	There were some models of how Specialist Schools could provide expert support to Mainstream Schools described by interviewees. These included Autism Connect, whereby behaviour support consultants worked with staff from Mainstream Schools, use of outreach teachers who provided specialist supports in relation to

Sub-Theme	Description
	specific needs (e.g., positive behaviour, children in out of home care), and specialist units in Mainstream Schools. Specific strategies that were used in these models and elsewhere included providing professional development, supports to teachers and, in some cases, intensive support to a school; development of long term partnerships with schools; Specialist Schools providing supports to networks of Mainstream Schools; partnership agreements between schools; exchange visits (Mainstream to Specialist and vice versa) in which staff could observe classroom practices; and development of buddy systems across Mainstream and Specialist Schools.
Relationships between Individuals	Prolonged engagement of specialist teachers in Mainstream Schools, and taking time were seen as key to developing trust and enhancing joint work to address student needs, both within classrooms and across schools. These individual relationships could build lines of communication, familiarity and ease of having an external person in the classroom and acceptance of their coaching. They were considered to provide the basis for effective consultations between specialists and mainstream teachers. Parents relied on good relationships with individuals in schools, especially teachers who showed empathy, and were willing to understand a family's situation.

The second overarching theme, "What is happening," included the roles played by allied health, specialist teachers, and ES staff and opportunities for interactions between Specialist and Mainstream Schools. The sub-themes and their descriptions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sub-themes and their Descriptions for "What is happening."

Sub-theme	Description
Role of Allied Health	There were reported differences in access to these professionals, regardless of whether they were or were not school-based, how they were funded (by parents, schools or DET), and how they worked (i.e., with individual children withdrawn from class or with teachers in the classroom). It was perceived that they were more available in Specialist Schools, but in this context, it was felt that they were more effective if they worked with teachers rather than individual children. They were seen as a valuable, but limited resource in both types of school.
Specialist Teaching and Consultation	The practice of a specialist working with a teacher was seen as the most effective way to build capacity to meet a student's needs. This work could include coaching, team teaching, providing teachers with ideas and resources, assisting with differentiating curriculum or collecting and then reviewing data for the purpose of developing Individual Learning Plans (ILP). A consultative rather than expert approach was seen as preferable, which was the basis for models in practice described above.
Education Support Staff	Having access to ES staff was often equated with a student having individual funding, particularly in Mainstream Schools. They worked in varied ways, including withdrawing a student for intervention, then assisting the student to carry the learning into the classroom, engaging a student in activities that differed to those for the other students or adapting the tasks being completed by peers. There were some differences in opinion about how to best make use of ES staff, including being focused totally on an individual student, moving from class to class, or providing support to the whole class. Concern was expressed that their presence could result in teachers relinquishing responsibility for a student with disability in his/her class, and for students to develop an over-reliance on them. ES staff valued the

Sub-theme	Description
	opportunity to visit Specialist Schools to observe class activities, but noted that professional development was often available to teachers, but not them.
Observations	Being able to visit another school was highly valued and resulted in positive feedback to host schools. They provided a means of seeing strategies in action to address specific student needs, to learn about student needs (e.g., when specialist teachers visited a mainstream classroom), and to dispel misconceptions (e.g., seeing that students in Specialist Schools were taught academic skills). In some situations, classroom observations were used as part of a transition process (i.e., seeing a child in a Mainstream School before s/he moved to a Specialist School). In one situation in which a Learning Unit was located in a school, mainstream class teachers could readily drop in to observe strategies being used with students with disability or particular needs.
Professional Development (PD)	PD was valued as a means to learn about specific disabilities, issues (especially challenging behaviour) or strategies, develop expertise, and provide reassurance about practices being implemented. It was delivered in various ways: e.g., at staff meetings, during visits to schools, to all staff in a school, and through networks or communities of practice. Some interviewees noted having to do PD in their own time.
Accessible Information and Supports	Specialist Schools were seen as having a wealth of relevant strategies, information and resources. Mainstream Schools valued opportunities to access their expertise, especially through visits to Specialist Schools or having their staff come to their school, which could facilitate tailoring supports to their situation and student needs. This sharing of expertise was felt to build confidence to use strategies that had been observed or recommended. Providing this information and support could happen in a variety of ways, including through direct support to a teacher about an individual, number of students or a whole school, and through structured PD. Resources needed to be made accessible to new staff.
Resource Kit and Strategies	This sub-theme related to accessible information and supports. Interviewees noted the types of resources and strategies they used, such as visual timetables, sensory equipment. Some resources related to planning or approaches, such as for developing Individual Support Plans (ISP) and Behaviour Support Plans (BSP), and could be made accessible through on-line repositories.

The third over-arching theme, "What could be implemented," included more access to supports, and extending these across all students with disability, tailored approaches and leadership to ensure whole of school commitment. The sub-themes and their descriptions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Sub-themes and their Descriptions for "What could be implemented."

Sub-theme	Description
Accessible information and supports	There was much discussion about the need for information and support that was readily accessible when it was needed, to ensure student's needs were met in a timely fashion. There was some desire to be able to access the resources and skills evident in Specialist Schools, such as through regular exchanges, access to individuals (peers) for information, to be able to discuss individual student needs, to debrief, and to know what strategies used in Specialist Schools could be adapted

Sub-theme	Description
	for mainstream settings. Family need for information and supports was discussed, including information on how to access funding, advocacy strategies, and supports for siblings. Ways to do this included development of individual relationships (having a "go to person" to problem solve with), physical co-location of Specialist and Mainstream Schools, and disseminating existing resources.
Extending across students	The potential to extend strategies and resources, and skills developed in response to one student's needs to other students who have similar or varied needs was discussed. In particular, the need to cater to students who may not have a diagnosed disability or individual funding was raised, including adapting strategies and resources for them or through whole of school approaches.
More of the same	There was discussion about extending or providing more resources and strategies that had been found useful or effective both within Specialist and Mainstream Schools. These included more access to expertise, more collaboration and time for planning and discussion, more specialists to fill available roles, back fill for Specialist School staff to free them up for visits and providing PD to other schools, extending resource allocations, and more time for PD.
Not one size fits all	It was acknowledged that there were differences both across and within students over time or contexts. Students had individual needs, or may not respond similarly to strategies. Observations helped convey a student's individuality or how the effectiveness of strategies may vary over time or across contexts. Some students may need totally different ways to manage their needs, such as programs delivered off-site or a change of school may be indicated. Data driven approaches, such as through assessments, could assist in understanding an individual student's needs.
Tailored approaches	Related to the previous sub-theme was the need to tailor approaches. Observing a student in his/her school context where problems may be evident, helped to develop understanding about the supports needed and how to tailor them. Tailored approaches could increase the need for individual supports, such as provided by dedicated ES staff, and could relate to differentiating the curriculum, using trial and error, and pacing activities. In addition, whole school approaches need to be tailored on the basis of what a school may want and what may suit it. The question was raised as to whether tailored or personalised supports were more possible in small classrooms, as found in Specialist Schools. Reviews of student data, including plans and progress, could provide insights into individual needs and how to tailor supports.
Whole school approach	Approaches that are adopted by the whole school was thought to promote consistency for students, help extend strategies developed for one student to others, make more efficient use of scarce resources (including access to allied health), align student goals to what a school wants to achieve, promote sharing of ideas and problem solving, assist with transitions for students (to new teachers, across classrooms), help to target PD to both school goals and staff needs in relation to specific students, and promote a positive, inclusive and supportive culture.
Leadership	Leadership in schools was required to develop and implement whole school approaches. It was also considered necessary for development of leadership skills to enable specialists to consult with and mentor peers on other schools. Involvement of Leadership teams assisted in ensuring the most effective use of external consultants.

The fourth over-arching theme, "What's needed," focused on capacity building, leadership, resourcing and agreements across schools and individuals. The sub-themes and their descriptions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Sub-themes and Descriptions for "What's needed."

Sub-theme	Description
Capacity Building	The most effective way to make use of Specialist School expertise and resources was thought to be through developing the skills of Mainstream School staff. It was noted that mainstream teachers have the training to be able to take information, strategies and resource ideas from Specialist Schools and adjust them to the needs of their own students. Training and access to mentors, PD, building a library of resources, supporting new graduates in this learning, providing hands on experience and coaching, providing opportunities for observations, and providing access to good reports and assessment data could build capacity and lessen reliance on external supports, which in turn could lead to a great deal of change.
Leadership	Specialists who provide consultation to other schools need to develop their own leadership skills, ensuring they are good communicators and have the content knowledge required. Schools need commitment from leaders within their own schools as well as in the community to create a positive culture, and structures to enable school-wide strategies, which in turn increase the chance of supports being extended to all students who stand to benefit. Leadership is also needed at the Departmental/ Government level, and was evidenced in the Review of the PSD.
Resourcing	Most resource needs centred around the need for (much) more funding and, relatedly, time. These would enable staff workload allocations to both provide and receive supports (e.g., to visit other schools, attend or deliver PD). Strategies to share resources, including specialist teachers and allied health professionals were also seen as ways to increase their efficient and effective use.
Shared agreement across schools and levels	In order to realise the possibilities, agreement was needed across Schools, staff, and families in terms of how to make use of funding, share resources and skills, being open to mentoring and coaching relationships, and how to develop effective partnerships.

In summary the stakeholder interviews provided a needs assessment, whereby difficulties faced by schools and parents appeared related to funding gaps, difficulties meeting varied student needs, lack of teacher expertise and/or confidence, and a reliance on ES staff, who themselves were seeking opportunities to develop the skills required to support students with disabilities. However, many practices that resulted in sharing of expertise and resources were evident, and this sharing appeared to be a two-way process. It was evident that Specialist Schools could and were playing a key role in building the capacity of Mainstream School staff. Systematising, extending and resourcing current practices, and strengthening relationships between schools and with parents, coupled with strong leadership, were indicated to be key to supporting inclusive education.

Co-design of Options

In this activity, stakeholders came together in a 1-day forum to co-design strategies and approaches for how Specialist Schools could provide expertise to support inclusive education practices in Mainstream Schools. The goal was for groups of stakeholders to design options informed by the evidence reviews and interview analyses.

All principals of schools who had participated in any of the previous activities, other PASS members and Mainstream School principals who had indicated an interest in the co-design forum, as well as individuals who had been interviewed were sent an email invitation and participant information about the forum, held in Melbourne on 23 March, 2017. There were 33 attendees, comprising 10 principals and 4 assistant principals (9 from Specialist and 5 from Mainstream Schools), 9 teachers (all from Specialist Schools), 5 specialist support consultants/ teachers (4 from Specialist and 1 from Mainstream), 2 allied health professionals (Specialist Schools) and 3 parents (two with children in Mainstream, and one with a child in a Mainstream and another in a Specialist School).

One week prior to attending the forum, a pre-reading pack was sent by email to each stakeholder who had returned a consent form. This comprised the Legislation and Policy Timeline (see Appendix A), and summaries of the evidence review and interview analyses as presented above. Hard copies of these documents were distributed at the forum. Attendees were assigned to one of five tables where they completed group work activities. Brief Powerpoint™ presentations set the stage for a series of discussions that culminated in each group developing one or more options. Each group was facilitated by a research team member, who also assisted in notetaking to capture their ideas, which they presented to the whole group as a final activity.

The researchers then transcribed all notes from the forum into a Word document, including all information from each group. As the options developed by each group were multi-component, each component was extracted and worded as a specific option according to a category. The five option categories that emerged from this process were:

A. Options for configuring the relationship between mainstream and specialist schools.
B. Options for co-ordinating demands and matching needs to expertise.
C. Options for ensuring necessary skills and leadership abilities.
D. Options for building mainstream capacity.
E. Options for achieving the transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability.

These options and the sub-options for each provided the basis for the final project activity, a survey of acceptability and feasibility.

Acceptability and Feasibility Survey

The aim of the final activity was to determine the extent to which each of the co-designed options were considered to be acceptable and feasible by a wider sample of stakeholders from both Specialist and Mainstream Schools. The options developed from the forum were presented in an online survey (Qualtrics). Background information was provided in a participant information document and at the beginning of the survey: this included the overall project aims and activities, and how the options were developed. A section for participant demographic information was included (these responses were optional). Then followed instructions that respondents rate each option, presented within in each option category (as described above) for acceptability, feasibility and the intensity of resource needs on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by “Highly” (rating of 5) and “Not at All” (rating of 1). Order effects were controlled by randomizing the order in which the option categories appeared each time the survey was accessed.

The survey was distributed through a link sent by email to each school principal and all stakeholders who had participated in any of the previous project activities. Recipients were asked to also forward the email invitation to any of the following stakeholders from their school community: teaching and teaching support personnel, allied health professionals, and parents. In an effort to obtain input from a sample of Mainstream Schools and families beyond those who had participated to this point, recipients of the email invitation were asked to distribute it to other schools. These email invitations were distributed just prior to the end of the first school term, with a reminder sent at the beginning of the next term. In addition, every fifth mainstream government primary and secondary school on a list available from the DET website (*n*=307) was also sent an invitation and link to the survey at the beginning of the second school term, with a deadline of one week. In light of the need to complete the project, no reminders were sent to these schools.

A total of 142 surveys were completed on-line. Respondents included 5 parents (4 mothers, 1 father); 4 had one child each with a disability and one had three. Four parents reported sending their children to Mainstream Schools and one to a Specialist School; 4 were located in metropolitan Melbourne. School personnel responding to the survey included 49 principals and 2 assistant principals (*n*=51), teachers (*n*=44), allied health professionals (4 speech pathologists, 1 social worker), and staff in specialist roles (*n*=26, such as behaviour support coach, teacher of the deaf, liaison officer, ASD/ inclusion coach). They had worked in education for 1 to 47 years (mean = 27 years) and in their current role from less than a year to 45 years (mean = 11 years). Most worked in Specialist Schools (71%) and were in metropolitan Melbourne (71%), with 18% in regional and 10% in rural Victoria. Most respondents were in combined primary/ secondary schools (60%), with 29% in primary only and 9% in secondary only schools.

Mean ratings were calculated within Qualtrics for acceptability, feasibility and intensity of resourcing for each option within the five option categories. Respondents who completed ratings for each option ranged from 129 to 142.

The mean acceptability ratings for the 22 options (distributed across the 5 categories) ranged from 3.26-4.40, with a mean of 3.88. The mean feasibility ratings ranged from 3.17-4.16, with

a mean of 3.64.The mean resource intensity ratings ranged from 3.62-4.4, with a mean of 4.16. These results indicate that, overall, the options were rated as moderately to highly acceptable and feasible, but with moderate to high resource intensity (i.e., resources needed to implement the option). Data were further explored to determine which options within each category were rated as the most acceptable and feasible. The mean scores and the percentage of respondents who rated each option highly (5 on the Likert scale) were graphed for each option category. These five graphs are presented in Appendix B. With a few exceptions, the highest mean scores were accompanied by the highest percentages of respondents rating the option highly; for the exceptions, there was little difference between percentages for options with the two highest mean ratings (e.g., compare options D6 and D7 for Options for building mainstream capacity in Appendix B). Visual inspection of these graphs indicate a clear highly rated option for each of option categories A, B, C and E, and four highly rated options for category D. These highly rated options for each category are as follows, with numbering reflecting that presented in the survey:

A. Options for configuring the relationship between mainstream and specialist schools.

2. Collaborative networks are formed based on location, comprising one or more Specialist Schools that share and exchange expertise and resources with a number of Mainstream Schools.

B. Options for co-ordinating demands and matching needs to expertise.

3. Each participating Specialist School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to liaise with Mainstream Schools; each participating Mainstream School has a dedicated “connector” position, the role of which is to link the school with the Specialist School.

C. Options for ensuring necessary skills and leadership abilities.

1. Specialist School Teachers providing expert support to Mainstream Schools have completed professional development in particular areas of expertise, and have experience and been supported (e.g., mentoring) to develop the leadership and other skills needed to provide the following supports: face-to-face coaching, support for experiential learning, the provision of in-class intensive supports to assist teachers of students with complex issues; and communicating with senior school staff.

D. Options for building mainstream capacity.

7. Education Support Staff are given full access to capacity building opportunities, including professional development, observing practice in Specialist Schools and in-classroom consultations with Specialist School staff.

6. All teachers in Mainstream Schools meet minimum professional development requirements that relate to the needs of any student with disability in the school.

8. Professional development is developed and delivered in flexible and varied modes that incorporate both on-line and face-face components.

3. All Mainstream School teachers within a network or partnership meet a condition of employment of having completed a placement within a specialist setting as a pre-service teacher.

E. Options for achieving the transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability.

3. Specialist Schools work collaboratively with Mainstream Schools to develop flexible learning outcomes for students.

The resource intensity ratings did not prove to be a sensitive preference indicator, with mean ratings ranging from 3.62-4.40, and overall mean of 4.06. Futher, most respondents indicated that all options would require resources in the form of budget (81%-92%, mean = 86%) or time (85%-97%, mean = 91%) allocations, or access to technology and other equipment (36%-71%, mean = 44%), or other resources (15%-49%, mean = 26%).

Comments provided by a few respondents indicated support for many of the options, but also concern that (a) too much responsibility would be placed on Specialist Schools, which could be stretched both in terms of covering large geographic areas and the nature of supports that may be required; (b) success required strong commitment by Mainstream Schools; (c) any professional development must include teachers as well as ES staff; and (d) budget and time allocations must be provided so as to properly resource any options and ensure their sustainability. In particular, some respondents commented on the need to ensure that any additional duties of either specialist or mainstream staff be adequately resourced so that they were not in addition to current work expectations.

Key Findings: Support for Identified Options

For each option, support in terms of inquiries and policy documents (from the grey literature), published research evidence (from the evidence reviews), and the interview data from the current project are indicated in matrix form in Appendix C, and discussed below. This information is presented with the following limitations in mind: (a) the evidence review was time limited (2010-2016)– hence there may be examples of options in the grey literature or for which there is evidence that were not reviewed as part of this project; and (b) the stakeholder interviews were based on a convenience sample, with Mainstream School staff, parents, ES staff and allied health professionals poorly represented in comparison with other groups – hence, the results cannot be considered to be representative of Specialist or Mainstream Schools. Also presented in this matrix are the mean ratings for acceptability, feasibility and intensity of resource needs from the final project activity. Again, these data are presented with caution regarding representativeness of participants, and, as a result, generalization of findings. Given that a snowballing approach was used in distributing the on-line survey, in addition to trying to capture a random selection of Government schools, it was not possible to determine a response rate, nor the representativeness of the sample. The fewer respondents from Mainstream Schools is indicative of a bias towards Specialist Schools. These limitations are mitigated by the multiple methods used to develop the options presented as a key outcome of this project.

A. Options for configuring the relationship between Mainstream and Specialist Schools.

2. Collaborative networks are formed based on location, comprising one or more Specialist Schools that share and exchange expertise and resources with a number of Mainstream Schools.

This option for configuring Mainstream and Specialist School relationships reflects those reported for the MSSD initiative (22, 26) and in international reports (20, 21). Little research support for this option was evident, reflecting an overall lack of empirical investigation into multi-component models for supporting inclusive education, generally, and the role of Specialist Schools in this process, in particular. Support for this option was evident in the interview data in that it provides the basis for consultations and exchanges, and opportunities for prolonged engagement to develop positive relationships.

B. Options for co-ordinating demands and matching needs to expertise.

3. Each participating Specialist School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to liaise with Mainstream Schools; each participating Mainstream School has a dedicated “connector” position, the role of which is to link the school with the Specialist School.

Examples of models in which educators with special education expertise have liased with and supported Mainstream Schools were evident in the MSSD reports (31), and in one project, a special educator was designated as a co-ordinator (23). Evident from the evaluation of this model was the need for dedicated roles in the Mainstream School (23), included in this option. Complementary roles across

Specialist and Mainstream Schools would also assist with building capacity (82), a theme that emerged from the interview data. Finally, this option could provide a single point of contact for parents, thereby addressing their need for a clear communication channel with someone who can provide support and facilitate their input to their child's education (90) (see also the sub-theme of parent involvement from the interviews).

C. Options for ensuring necessary skills and leadership abilities.

1. Specialist School Teachers providing expert support to Mainstream Schools have completed professional development in particular areas of expertise, and have experience and been supported (e.g., mentoring) to develop leadership and other skills needed to provide the following supports: face-to-face coaching, support for experiential learning, the provision of in-class intensive supports to assist teachers of students with complex issues; and communicating with senior school staff.

MSSD reports (31, 95, 96) and the research evidence point to the need to ensure that specialist staff providing supports have content expertise (86). In the interview data, the need for leadership and mentoring skills was also noted. Comments provided by respondents to the acceptability and feasibility survey indicated concern that specialists have the skills required to support mainstream teachers to cater to the needs of their students with disabilities. Interview themes also addressed the need to ensure that expertise is provided in relation to a range of student characteristics and needs.

D. Options for building mainstream capacity.

7. Education Support Staff are given full access to capacity building opportunities, including professional development, observing practice in Specialist Schools and in-classroom consultations with Specialist School staff.

6. All teachers in Mainstream Schools meet minimum professional development requirements that relate to the needs of any student with disability in the school.

8. Professional development is developed and delivered in flexible and varied modes that incorporate both on-line and face-face components.

3. All Mainstream School teachers within a network or partnership meet a condition of employment of having completed a placement within a specialist setting as a pre-service teacher.

These options are discussed together, as they provide complementary supports, which have been addressed to varying extents in the grey and academic literature. There is evidence that ES staff who receive appropriate professional development can support students with disabilities to achieve academically (59). However, the option of providing capacity building opportunities for ES staff must be considered in conjunction with evidence that over-reliance on them results in poor outcomes (59, 63), and denies students with disability access to the skilled teaching supports they require (58, 59), and, according to human rights conventions (e.g., UNCRPD, 2006), should receive. The other options within this category find support in evidence of

more effective use of specialist consultants when there is a focus on building the capacity, skills and confidence of mainstream teachers (43). Certainly, this requirement was evident across themes from the interview data and comments made by respondents to the acceptability and feasibility survey.

E. Options for achieving the transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability.

3. Specialist Schools work collaboratively with Mainstream Schools to develop flexible learning outcomes for students.

This option relates to the need for specialist and mainstream teachers, as well as other professionals (in particular allied health) to use student data in identifying appropriate academic and other goals for students with disability (82, 97). The need for flexibility was key in many of the initiatives from the MSSD (82, 98), and is underpinned by a strong theme from both the evidence reviews and interview data: that is, adequate time for collaborative work that has a focus on addressing individual student needs (10, 49).

Existing Collaborative Relationships and Alignment with Identified Options

The review of the grey literature, survey of PASS members and interviews provided evidence that a number of Specialist Schools across Victoria have strong collaborative relationships with Mainstream Schools and are engaging in activities that reflect one or more of the identified options that emerged from this project. These are described as follows:

- Katandra is providing support, coaching, professional development and resource supports to Mainstream Schools across three metropolitan Local Government Areas, with a focus on supporting the inclusion of children with intellectual disability (aligns with Options A & D);

- Baltara School has been delivering an outreach program to support metropolitan Mainstream Schools since 2015. This support has included expert in-class teaching by an outreach teacher and case conferencing to address severe challenging behaviours in students with varied needs (i.e., assisting schools to implement the School Wide Positive Supports – SWPBS- framework). In 2017, Baltara School built a collaborative relationship with Bendigo Special Developmental School to extend delivery of the outreach model to Bendigo Primary Schools (Options A, D);

- East Gippsland Specialist School has collaborated with Orbost Secondary College in a pilot project involving the sharing of a Leading Teacher who acted as a “connector” between the schools and engaged in Mainstream School capacity building (99) (Options B, D);

- schools participating in Autism Connect have been involved in Mainstream School capacity building to support students with autism, including in implementing positive behaviour supports, developing and implementing visual supports, communication strategies, curriculum differentiation and development and review of individual education plans (32); this model, in particular, demonstrates the importance of content-specific expertise and leadership skills to enable effective mentoring and other supports to mainstream colleagues (Options A, C, D, E);

- the Wodonga Federation of Government Schools is a strategic collaboration across seven Mainstream and one Specialist School – demonstrating a collaborative arrangement of schools that share a commitment to equal educational opportunities for all students (see **http://www.wodonga.vic.edu.au/our-federation/about-us/**) (Option A).

It should be noted that these models may align with options additional to those identified, but details required to determine this were not available to the researchers. Futher, each of these models addresses specific types of special needs (e.g., reducing challenging behaviour to increase learning opportunities and social engagement, modifying curriculum and providing resources for students with intellectual disability). As a result, no one existing model addresses the full diversity of need reflected in the various types of disabilities experienced by students in Government schools (inclusive of those with and without individual funding).

The survey of PASS members demonstrated that most were engaged in activites that serve to build the capacity of Mainstream Schools to implement inclusive practices, mostly through delivery of professional development, but some also provided in-class supports. The interview data revealed other supports included opportunities for school personnel to visit Specialist Schools and observe classroom practices.

Summary and Final Considerations

The activities of this project resulted in eight options for Victorian Specialist Schools to become "Centres of Expertise" to support Mainstream Schools to implement inclusive education. Through five key activities, a total of 22 options distributed across five option categories were co-designed by 33 stakeholders from Specialist and Mainstream School communities. The co-design process was informed by models and practices evident in the international literature and recent research evidence, and themes that emerged from analysis of 32 stakeholder interviews. Finally, stakeholders rated the acceptability and feasibility, and resource needs of the co-designed options to identify the options.

These identified options address how to configure the relationship between Mainstream and Specialist Schools, co-ordinate demands for and matching needs to Specialist School expertise, ensure necessary skills and leadership abilities of specialist personnel, build Mainstream School capacity, and ensure transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability. The options reflect previous models and practices that have been implemented in Australia and internationally, as well as current Victorian models and practices, and have varying support from research evidence. The options were perceived by stakeholders to be resource-intensive, in particular in terms of budget allocation required and staffing to ensure the implementation of any option did not result in additional work for individual staff members that could overburden them or detract from their core or daily work. It should be noted that these were perceptions only in that the project did not include any attempt to cost options.

Although the options emerged from strong stakeholder involvement across the activities, certain groups were not well-represented, especially parents, ES staff and allied health professionals; and there was much greater participation of Specialist than Mainstream School personnel. Further, complete consensus for each option was not sought, nor obtained. As a result, an effective communication strategy and consultation with groups that were poorly represented in this project are warranted to reduce the risks that may arise in the implementation of these options, such as resistance to changes in roles. The effectiveness of such consultation may be enhanced if this report, either in its entirety or in part, is made available in the public domain or to specific stakeholder groups.

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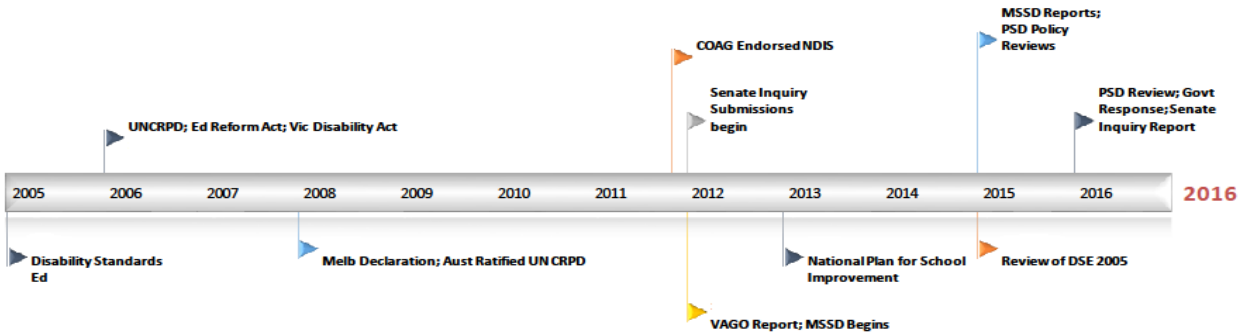
Appendices

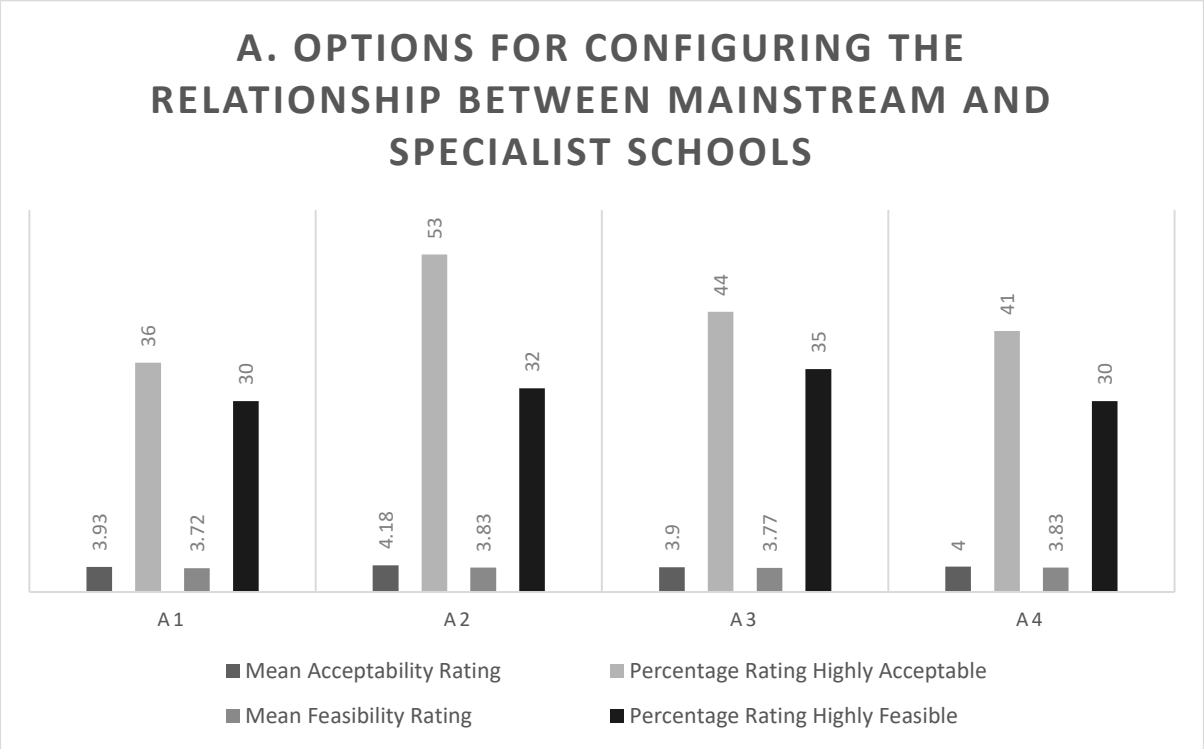
APPENDIX A: POLICY AND LEGISLATION TIMELINE



1992: DDA
1994: Salamanca Declaration

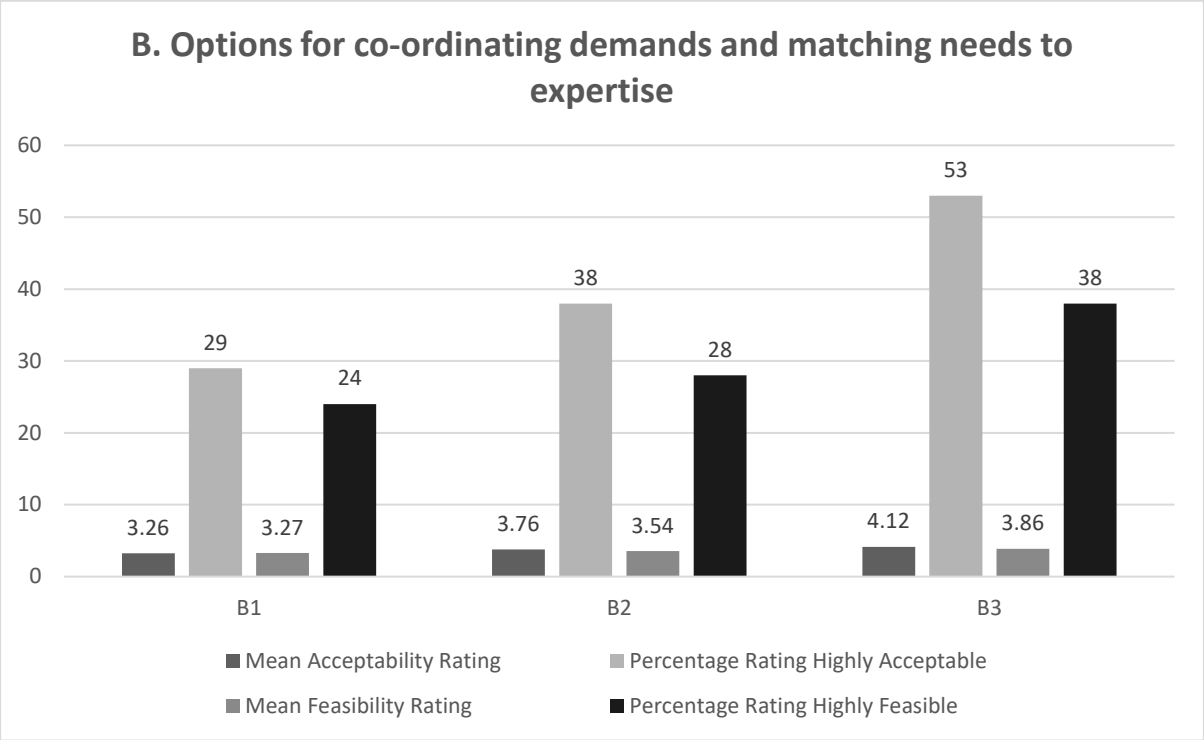
Figure 1. Legislation, policies and initiatives from a review of the grey literature 2011-2016

APPENDIX B: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF ACCEPTABILITY AND FEASIBILITY RATINGS



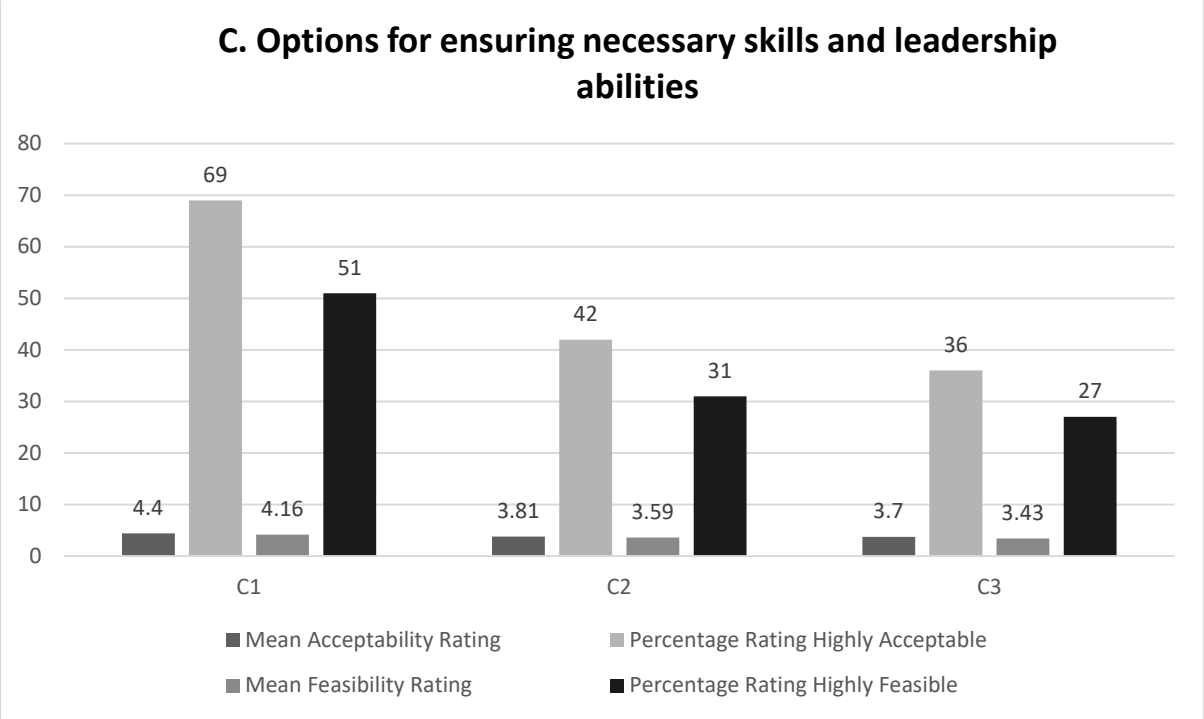
Options Legend

1. Collaborative networks are formed comprising one Specialist School that provides expertise to a number of local Mainstream Schools.
2. Collaborative networks are formed based on location, comprising one or more Specialist Schools that share and exchange expertise and resources with a number of Mainstream Schools.
3. A Specialist School is allocated to one or more Mainstream Schools to provide expertise based on need.
4. Collaborative Exchange Networks are developed with Specialist Schools as the hub for the purpose of providing supports to a number of local Mainstream Schools.



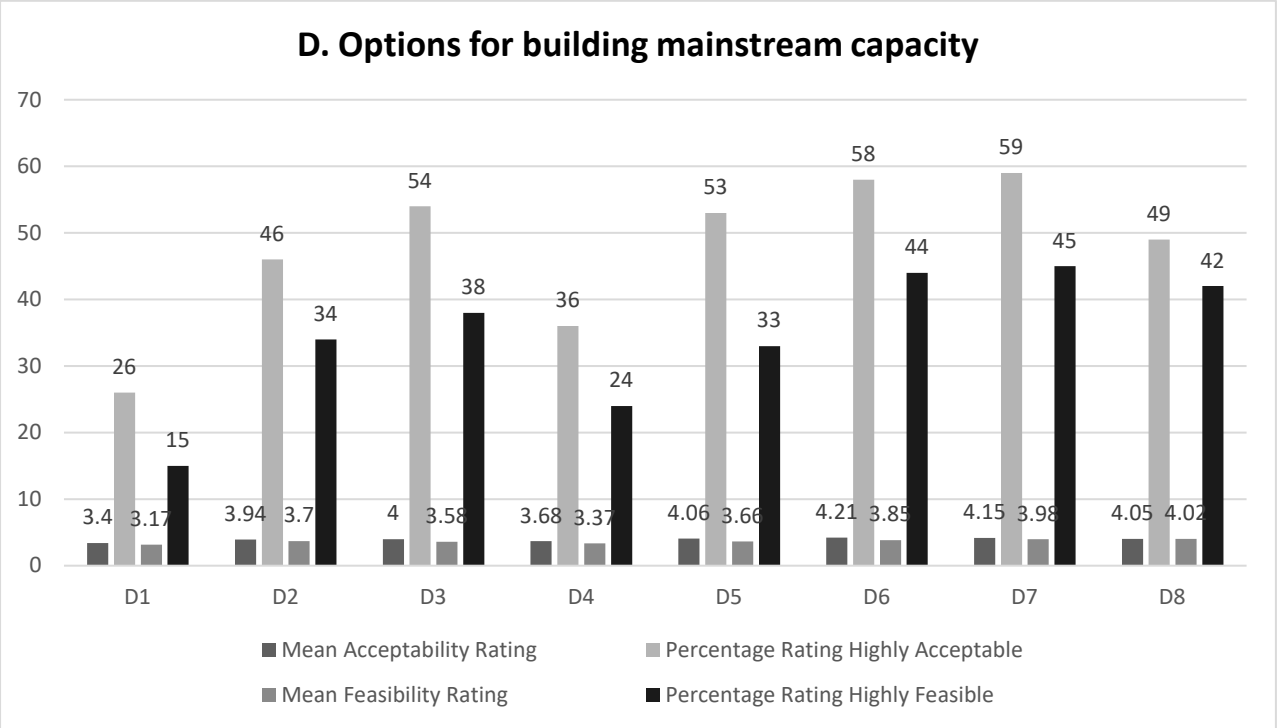
Options Legend

1. Co-ordination occurs at the regional level, where requests from Mainstream Schools are triaged and expertise of individuals within Specialist Schools are matched to need.
2. Each Mainstream School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to identify the needs and resources required, which they request from a Specialist School.
3. Each participating Specialist School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to liaise with Mainstream Schools; each participating Mainstream School has a dedicated “connector” position, the role of which is to link the school with the Specialist School.



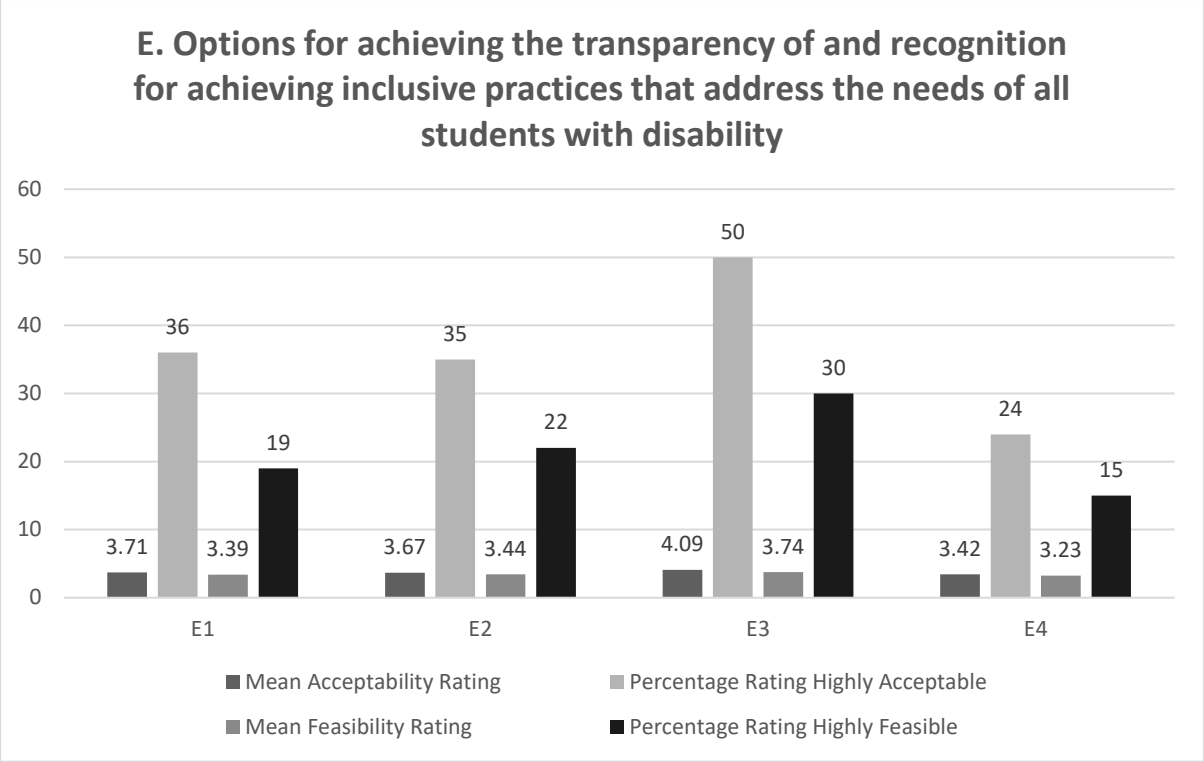
Options Legend

1. Specialist School Teachers providing expert support to Mainstream Schools have completed professional development in particular areas of expertise, and have experience and been supported (e.g., mentoring) to develop the leadership and other skills needed to provide the following supports: face-to-face coaching, support for experiential learning, the provision of in-class intensive supports to assist teachers of students with complex issues; and communicating with senior school staff.
2. Allied Health practitioners employed by the DET provide professional development and direct support to Specialist School teachers to enable them to implement recommendations from student assessments.
3. Specialist School Teachers have access to a program of teacher- exchange with a Mainstream School for a negotiated period of time.



Options Legend

1. Specialist Schools provide intensive supports to a limited number of Mainstream Schools for negotiated periods, then move these intensive supports to other schools; over time, the expertise of Mainstream Schools developed through this process is made available to other schools within a network or partnership group.
2. Allied Health practitioners employed by the DET provide professional development and direct support to Mainstream School teachers to enable them to implement recommendations from student assessments.
3. All Mainstream School teachers within a network or partnership meet a condition of employment of having completed a placement within a specialist setting as a pre-service teacher.
4. Mainstream Teachers have access to a program of teacher- exchange with a Specialist School for a negotiated period of time.
5. Each Mainstream School employs a Special Education Teacher with time allocation to visit and receive supports from a Specialist School.
6. All teachers in Mainstream Schools meet minimum professional development requirements that relate to the needs of any student with disability in the school.
7. Education Support Staff are given full access to capacity building opportunities, including professional development, observing practice in Specialist Schools and in-classroom consultations with Specialist School staff.
8. Professional development is developed and delivered in flexible and varied modes that incorporate both on-line and face-face components.



Options Legend

1. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to meet mandatory inclusion standards that include those articulated in the Disability Standards for Education 2005, with specific additional requirements developed by the Department of Education and Training through consultation with parents, principals, teachers, and education support staff.
2. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to articulate commitment to inclusion practices in their strategic plans, formalised and made explicit through their Framework for Improving Student Outcomes, policies and processes.
3. Specialist Schools work collaboratively with Mainstream Schools to develop flexible learning outcomes for students.
4. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to measure progress towards meeting inclusion standards through the identification and application of an index of inclusion.

APPENDIX C: MATRIX OF SUPPORT FOR OPTIONS DEVELOPED THROUGH PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Options	Grey Literature	Research Evidence	Stakeholder Interviews	Survey Ratings[a]		
				Acceptability	Feasibility	Resource Intensity
A. Options for configuring the relationship between mainstream and specialist schools						
1. Collaborative networks are formed comprising one Specialist School that provides expertise to a number of local Mainstream Schools.	+		+	3.93 36%	3.72 30%	4.24 51%
2. Collaborative networks are formed based on location, comprising one or more Specialist Schools that share and exchange expertise and resources with a number of Mainstream Schools.	+		+	4.18 53%	3.83 32%	4.23 48%
3. A Specialist School is allocated to one or more Mainstream Schools to provide expertise based on need.				3.90 44%	3.77 35%	4.14 47%
4. Collaborative Exchange Networks are developed with Specialist Schools as the hub for the purpose of providing supports to a number of local Mainstream Schools.	+		+	3.26 29%	3.27 24%	4.16 47%
B. Options for co-ordinating demands and matching needs to expertise.						
1. Co-ordination occurs at the regional level, where requests from Mainstream Schools are triaged and expertise of individuals within Specialist Schools are matched to need.	+		+	3.26 29%	3.27 24%	3.96 43%
2. Each Mainstream School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to identify the needs and				3.76	3.54	3.97

Options	Grey Literature	Research Evidence	Stakeholder Interviews	Survey Ratings[a]		
				Acceptability	Feasibility	Resource Intensity
resources required, which they request from a Specialist School.				38%	28%	39%
3. Each participating Specialist School has a dedicated co-ordinator position, the role of which is to liaise with Mainstream Schools; each participating Mainstream School has a dedicated "connector" position, the role of which is to link the school with the Specialist School.	+		+	4.12 53%	3.86 38%	4.18 47%
C. Options for ensuring necessary skills and leadership abilities.						
1. Specialist School Teachers providing expert support to Mainstream Schools have completed professional development in particular areas of expertise, and have experience and been supported (e.g., mentoring) to develop the leadership and other skills needed to provide the following supports: face-to-face coaching, support for experiential learning, the provision of in-class intensive supports to assist teachers of students with complex issues; and communicating with senior school staff.	+		+	4.4 69%	4.16 51%	4.4 60%
2. Allied Health practitioners employed by the DET provide professional development and direct support to Specialist School teachers to enable them to implement recommendations from student assessments.	+	+	+	3.81 42%	3.59 31%	4.19 54%
3. Specialist School Teachers have access to a program of teacher- exchange with a Mainstream School for a negotiated period of time.				3.70 36%	3.43 27%	3.92 42%

Options	Grey Literature	Research Evidence	Stakeholder Interviews	Survey Ratings[a]		
				Acceptability	Feasibility	Resource Intensity
D. Options for building mainstream capacity						
1. Specialist Schools provide intensive supports to a limited number of Mainstream Schools for negotiated periods, then move these intensive supports to other schools; over time, the expertise of Mainstream Schools developed through this process is made available to other schools within a network or partnership group.			+	3.40 26%	3.17 15%	4.11 47%
2. Allied Health practitioners employed by the DET provide professional development and direct support to Mainstream School teachers to enable them to implement recommendations from student assessments.	+		+	3.94 46%	3.70 34%	4.06 50%
3. All Mainstream School teachers within a network or partnership meet a condition of employment of having completed a placement within a specialist setting as a pre-service teacher.				4.00 54%	3.58 38%	3.62 34%
4. Mainstream Teachers have access to a program of teacher-exchange with a Specialist School for a negotiated period of time.			+	3.68 36%	3.37 24%	4.02 44%
5. Each Mainstream School employs a Special Education Teacher with time allocation to visit and receive supports from a Specialist School.				4.06 53%	3.66 33%	4.18 53%
6. All teachers in Mainstream Schools meet minimum professional development requirements that relate to the needs of any student with disability in the school.				4.21 58%	3.85 44%	4.12 52%

Options	Grey Literature	Research Evidence	Stakeholder Interviews	Survey Ratings[a]		
				Acceptability	Feasibility	Resource Intensity
7. Education Support Staff are given full access to capacity building opportunities, including professional development, observing practice in Specialist Schools and in-classroom consultations with Specialist School staff.	+	+	+	4.15 59%	3.98 45%	3.97 44%
8. Professional development is developed and delivered in flexible and varied modes that incorporate both on-line and face-face components.	+		+	4.05 49%	4.02 42%	3.85 36%
E. Options for achieving the transparency of and recognition for achieving inclusive practices that address the needs of all students with disability						
1. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to meet mandatory inclusion standards that include those articulated in the Disability Standards for Education 2005, with specific additional requirements developed by the Department of Education and Training through consultation with parents, principals, teachers, and education support staff.	+	+		3.71 36%	3.39 19%	4.16 46%
2. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to articulate commitment to inclusion practices in their strategic plans, formalised and made explicit through their Framework for Improving Student Outcomes, policies and processes.	+		+	3.67 35%	3.44 22%	3.91 39%
3. Specialist Schools work collaboratively with Mainstream Schools to develop flexible learning outcomes for students.	+	+	+	4.09 50%	3.74 30%	4.14 46%
4. Specialist Schools support Mainstream Schools to measure progress towards meeting inclusion standards through the identification and application of an index of inclusion.	+		+	3.42 24%	3.23 15%	3.96 42%

Note: a = data are mean ratings and percentage of respondents rating the option as highly acceptable or feasible; grey shading indicates the final identified options within each category.