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SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES

A Collaborative Approach to Meeting the Requirements of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: An Action Research Approach[†]

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Abstract

This paper describes a collaborative approach to professional learning that has provided an opportunity for refreshed practices and growth in capacity in schools supporting students with various learning needs in several schools that are part of the Association of Independent Schools in the Australian Capital Territory. An action research approach to professional learning for school staff was facilitated with the participating schools in 2018/2019, centred on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability.

The implementation of whole-of-system changes in the way education and other human supports are delivered is both exciting and daunting. Historically, one only has to think back to the introduction of the Medicare program in the late 1970s Australia wide to recognise the complex variables that must be considered when social change is proposed. In Australia, the last decade has witnessed two leading-edge social experiments nationally: the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) programs (Education Council, 2018).

This paper will provide insights into how the second of these innovations, the NCCD program, has provided an opportunity for refreshed practices and professional growth in capacity in schools supporting students with disability in several schools that are part of the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The NCCD delivers funding for students with disability on the basis of reported adjustments made in schools for those students. The protocols have been constantly revised since inception, and this developmental approach has allowed new opportunities to move away from a categorical model of funding and support for students with disability and focus instead on the real adjustments necessary for individuals in their learning contexts. The NCCD is a national program and impacts all jurisdictions, guided by a cross-sector joint working group.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate how inclusive practices can be delivered in schools when opportunities for reflection and ongoing evidence-based professional learning and support for school staff are

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provided. To achieve this aim, background information is provided in Table 1 on the six steps of a hybrid action research approach to professional learning for school staff that was facilitated with the participating schools in 2018/2019, based on their particular needs. It is important to view these steps within the larger process of implementation, whereby a considered sequence of key variables is required in order to both energise and sustain changing practices in human service settings (Fixsen, Blase, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009). The steps and collaborative processes used in this project were intended as an opportunity for critical reflection on existing needs, the introduction of new approaches, and the evaluation of both the processes and outcomes. Given that larger systemic change can take up to four years, this was an initial effort by AIS to provide an opportunity to build capacity in member schools in light of the NCCD program nationally.

The Lead Role of AISACT

AISACT is the peak body representing the ACT independent school sector. The AISACT strategic intent states (in part):

> [The] purpose [of the organisation is] to advocate for and support AISACT Member schools in providing excellent educational outcomes for their students …

The role of the education support manager for AISACT is working with staff in responding to the learning needs of students with disabilities. This is accomplished by

- utilising the NCCD tool and processes to provide a platform for engaging teachers, leaders and support staff in the development and implementation of personalised learning
- providing networking and sharing opportunities for teachers in education support–specific roles
- consulting face-to-face in schools to provide professional learning, resources and opportunities for reflection and debriefing.

The number of schools (19) and the small size of the ACT enable close connections and opportunities for collaboration. This means that the education support manager is aware of school processes for identifying and planning for students, and practices in maintaining evidence collection, and has many opportunities for noting, celebrating and promoting good practice and positive student outcomes. This level of liaison with people in schools also allows for ease in facilitating problem-solving and connecting of teachers with similar cohorts or problems of practice.

Initiative Implementation

Table 1 outlines the six steps followed in enacting this program of capacity building. Throughout the steps, collaboration, inclusive evidence-based practices, critical reflection and ongoing support by colleagues are embedded as key elements common to the journey of all participants.

The four snapshots that follow provide actual examples of the changes schools and teachers made as part of this process of critical reflection on practice and professional learning. In line with international ethical protocols, formal approval was not required beyond the agreement of the school principal and the participating teachers, as data were limited to one school setting in each snapshot. It is important to note that the types of strategies and outcomes, like the school settings, were very different from each other, reflecting the tailored approach used by the school-based teams in the context of a hybrid action research cycle, guided professional learning and coaching supports. Likewise, by the very nature of the process, changes continue to be made in schools as data emerge and needs and goals change.

Table 1. Steps in the Initiative Implementation

Step 1 Commit: System commitment to schools and teaching staff
The initial step was a commitment in resources and goodwill in the form of an invitation to AIS schools to participate in a staged series of workshops and undertakings for a form of action research and professional learning in the context of school needs. This included release from classroom activities and a series of follow-through tasks as a result of the action research and professional learning activities.

Step 2 Plan: Teachers meet, are guided to set goals and recruit school partner in two half-day sessions
A key learning support team member attended two sessions, facilitated by the AIS and assisted by an academic from The University of Newcastle, to reflect on the needs of their school, identify a colleague to be approached in their school and commence professional reading in the area of inclusive practices. Each participating school team member was provided with a copy of *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education: Using Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies* by David Mitchell (2014), along with other professional resources relevant to the activities. Their task was to collaborate with a colleague and return as a pair to the next two sessions of 4 hours with the AIS team a few weeks later.

Step 3 Goals: School teams meet for two half-day sessions on evidence-led practices, self-assessment and goal setting
In these sessions away from the classroom, school pairs were assisted in reflecting on their school needs in the context of NCCD, identifying evidence-led sources that would assist them using Mitchell (2014) and other tools provided by the facilitator team, defining typical action research processes and setting SMART goals they could enact in their setting.

Step 4 Act: Enact plans and report back to group
Once goals and professional learning resources had been identified, school teams enacted their goals (see the following snapshots for details). The central goal of the program was to keep the localised action research real (achievable) but rigorous (evidence based). SMART goals were the means by which actions were applied in situ and outcomes measured for impact.

Step 5 Coaching: Implement plans with check-in support from facilitators as needed
Team members were provided with coaching advice as requested by them, on a needs basis, from the AIS leader and the academic colleague. This was delivered in a mode that worked best for the participating schools, and may have been in the form of phone chats, visits, emails or other informal interactions. For example, one school team may write to the AIS and university colleague, seeking clarification on elements of a selected teaching strategy they were employing in their school. In another situation, a brief phone chat or the provision of a specific resource will be the support needed by participants.

Step 6 Share: Write snapshot and showcase findings for educational jurisdiction
A final celebratory activity took place in November 2019 whereby brief reports on the enacted strategies, outcomes achieved and future directions were showcased in a professional learning event hosted by AIS and submitted for review and possible publication in this paper.

Snapshot 1

Shifting the Rhetoric: The Power of Teacher Collective Efficacy: Radford College

Picture this: A mixed ability Year 8 maths class, working away in small groups estimating and measuring shapes including kites and trapeziums. The teacher is walking from table to table, checking in with students, providing praise and encouragement as well as engaging in conversation about strategies and terminology needed to complete the problems. At one table, a student is working with a support teacher on a modified version of the task, 'guessing' and measuring a series of physical objects. The student is just as engaged and relaxed in the learning environment as the other students in the class. Unremarkable, we hear you say? And that is exactly what we have been aiming for: inclusion embedded into daily practice.

Our goal was to design and implement an inclusive modified program for a student with a moderate cognitive disability during their transition into our mainstream high school. In particular, we wanted to support teachers for the best possible learning outcomes, in both academic and pastoral domains, as this was new to many teachers. At first, many of the teachers were understandably daunted by the prospect of the transition. This is not because they were unwilling but instead came from a place of concern. Teachers were worried that they would not adequately meet the needs of the student. Questions posed included, 'But I am not trained in this area, how can I help?', or 'Is being in my class

the best thing for the student?'. Reflecting on these questions, we could see that our task in leading and supporting teachers needed to be multifaceted, and so we planned the following:

- adopting a concerns-based adoption model (see http://www.sedl.org/cbam/), including seeking feedback on the journey and involving teachers in decision-making, where possible
- developing a comprehensive learning plan. The plan is dynamic and responsive to the needs of the student and includes specific steps of what action to take in different scenarios that may occur, including if the student doesn't arrive to class, what to do on excursions or during fire alarms
- setting clear, achievable pastoral and academic goals and monitoring progress along the way
- providing opportunities for teachers to meet regularly and collaborate on best practice and lessons learnt from their personal experience
- coaching and supporting teachers in behaviour management strategies and in modifying outcomes, learning activities, resources and assessment tasks
- providing access to professional learning opportunities
- supporting all persons in the classroom, including peer mentors from older year groups as well as learning support assistance and teachers
- engaging in frequent communication between parents, teachers and support staff.

What have we noticed over the transition period? Although the semester meetings still take place, we have seen that, over time, the frequency of notes around concerns for the student on our electronic student management system have gradually slowed.

We have also noted that teachers need less support in creating modified unit outcomes and to report progress as they become more confident in designing appropriately challenging learning activities and seeking out resources. Instead, we can see embedded supports emerging within and across departments, teachers sharing with and advising each other, and drawing upon expertise and experiences of working with the student. Many teachers comment on the relational aspect as being the key to success. And, while not quantifiable, the rhetoric has shifted from 'I don't know where to start' to dialogue that is focused on how to capitalise on the student's many strengths as well as devising strategies to develop areas of need in learning, which we know as teachers is the key to any student's development.

So, what have we learnt? Working together, the pastoral team, support team and classroom teachers have developed a rich knowledge of the student as well as created a library of resources to support both academic and pastoral learning outcomes in a scalable way across the school. And, dialogue is positive, purposeful and brimming with new ideas, which demonstrates the power of collective teacher efficacy.

Snapshot 2

The Power Within: Working to Unlock the Power of Professional Collaboration: Galilee School

Working with disengaged and vulnerable youth who have struggled to thrive in mainstream education can result in highly competent, experienced teachers scratching their heads and asking the question, 'What is the key?', forever searching for that little piece of magic that will allow them to support these young people so that they can succeed in education and open more options for the future.

At Galilee School, we are a registered, independent secondary school supporting young people in Years 7–10 for whom mainstream education has struggled to deliver positive outcomes. We are a special assistance school supporting the Canberra region and employ a team of highly skilled educators, youth workers and support staff. Our staff have an extensive variety of skills and experience, and we set out to explore how we could better unlock the expertise that existed within our own staff, rather than waiting to find the key. We specifically started with the teaching team.
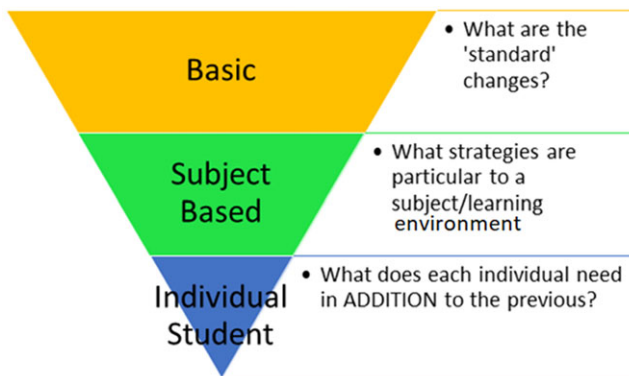
Figure 1. Model of Levels of Differentiated Adjustment.

Our shared challenge

Our aim was to improve differentiation through establishing a collaborative culture to share ideas for ways to support student engagement and developing a consistent method of recording methods and strategies (see Figure 1). Our school already provides an individual learning plan (ILP) for every student who attends, as differentiation is crucial for accessibility and student engagement in learning. We wanted to continue our journey to de-privatise differentiation in a way that would support teachers and also provide greater consistency for students.

The goal we set together was to create space for collaborative conversation around differentiation. It is worth noting that this has grown to include strategies for modification of curriculum, student engagement, and student support. We also wanted to look at the methods teachers were using to record differentiation and then move to a more consistent method without restricting teacher creativity and practice. The second part of our goal initially appeared less revolutionary until you put yourself in the position of a new teacher or the existing staff member who takes on a new curriculum area or age group and no longer needs to start from scratch.

Our sources of evidence: How we knew about the strategies we introduced

Professional collaboration is crucial in our relatively small school. We work with students who, for many different reasons, have not thrived in mainstream education; understanding our students and their stories is crucial to their success at our school. Through structured collaboration, we have a greater opportunity to build a more complete picture of the individual and understand their needs to access education. Ongoing professional collaboration also means that we can be clearer and consistent in the things we do for every student, subject or learning environment changes, and those specific to the individual. Our belief in the power of professional collaboration was reinforced while exploring Mitchell's collaborative teaching strategy. Mitchell (2014) explores the underlying idea of collaborative teaching and identifies several benefits of the strategy, including the opportunity for synergistic team-based solutions and new approaches in complex learning environments.

What we did: The new strategies we tried

We started this process by restructuring teaching team meetings. A dedicated time commitment of half an hour was given in each fortnightly meeting for teachers to share a problem of practice, with specific focus on differentiation, and seek suggestions/ideas from the teaching and learning team.

In addition to this, the team discussed differentiation and how we kept a record of the strategies and supports we have implemented for individual students. Teachers made a commitment to explore ways of recording what they were doing in their curriculum plans. Initially, each person would explore their own methods and we would come back to consider which methods worked and which methods had

not. The following term we decided as a team to change the format of our planners so that the information could be more consistently recorded.

How it went: The evidence we collected on learning and teaching

Collaboration time in our meetings has been a great success. Staff now actively volunteer and at times seek to look at addressing specific challenges that have arisen. These are powerful discussions to witness. The teaching team now have a dedicated time for collaboration and a more consistent method of recording the adjustments they make for students, particularly at a subject level. The process has also improved our ability to collect information and data for other areas of the school such as the NCCD.

Where to from here: Changing what we do in light of our data

We have made progress on our journey but will continue to work to improve. Our school is in the process of designing a student management system that will help us to track information at an individual student level. This system should continue to allow greater collaboration among all staff. As a team, we are looking to develop a 'playbook' of common strategies so that we have a consistent language and also start to develop a reference for staff who are new to the school.

Snapshot 3

Using the NCCD Moderation Process as a Vehicle for Effective Collaboration to Improve the Quality of Evidence and Adjustments Being Made for Students with Disability in a K–12 School: Orana Steiner School

Orana Steiner School is a K–12 independent school in the ACT. Since its inception in 2015, the NCCD has been managed at the school level by the school's student support team.

Between 2015 and 2018, the student support team carried the responsibility of designing, setting up, implementing data collection processes, and facilitating teacher training regarding the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA; Commonwealth of Australia, 1992), the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) and the NCCD process. This impacted on the understanding teachers across the school had about their responsibilities for students with disability, the NCCD process in general and their specific role in the process.

The uptake of the school-based data collection process by teachers at Orana Steiner School has been viewed by the various student support teams that have operated over the past 5 years at the school as an issue of importance. As a result, a variety of data collection systems have been designed and implemented with the aim of improving the quality of data submitted for NCCD purposes. A lack of understanding by teachers about the reasons for collecting the data was also highlighted through the 2017–2018 moderation process. Over time, outcomes were becoming a focus in an effort to implement a consistent NCCD process across the school. The data that were being collected for NCCD purposes indicated that some key changes needed to be made in order to improve the quality of adjustments that were being made in classrooms across the school for students with disability.

In identifying students with disability and reviewing processes and practices at sectoral, school and classroom levels, the NCCD model relies on a collaborative approach being undertaken to collect data on reasonable adjustments that are being made to provide students with disability access to education on the same basis as their peers (Education Council, 2018, p. 10).

Collaboration has been defined by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL; 2017) as 'a community working to achieve a common goal through the sharing of practice, knowledge and problems' (p. 2). Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) make the point that the benefits that professional collaboration brings for both teachers and students, such as increasing student achievement, increasing teacher retention and whole-school improvement, are widely acknowledged in the research literature. In line with this, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian

Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011) lists 'Engage with colleagues and improve practice' (focus area 6.3; p. 20) as a key element in improving teacher quality and, therefore, educational outcomes for students.

The 2017–2018 NCCD process at Orana Steiner School highlighted a need for developing a meaningful, collaborative and whole-school approach to the NCCD, and as part of this, a system change was required for the collection of evidence of adjustments for students with disability. An action research project provided a systematic process through which positive change could be made at the classroom and whole-school level.

Effective collaboration was the area of focus for the action research project, with the NCCD process serving as the vehicle for introducing a model that would lead to more effective teacher collaboration across the school in order to improve the quality of adjustments being made for students with disability.

Two goals were set for the action research project:

1. By mid-cycle (Term 4, 2018), a collaborative model will be developed that engages all staff in the NCCD moderation process.
2. By end of cycle (Term 2, 2019), the quality of adjustments made for students with disability at Orana Steiner School and the evidence of these adjustments will be improved for NCCD purposes.

Several strategies were systematically implemented across the school during the 2018–2019 NCCD cycle in order to work towards the goals of the project.

First, a whole-school professional learning session was provided to staff in the July 2018 stand-down period with a focus on the DDA and reasonable adjustments for students with disability. The session was delivered by the school's learning support coordinator and the education support manager for the AISACT.

Second, the previous system for collecting evidence of adjustments made for students with disability at the school was discontinued. A temporary system that gave teachers a hard copy and an electronic option for collecting evidence of adjustments was implemented through face-to-face meetings between the learning support coordinator and the teaching staff in kindergarten, primary school and high school faculty meetings.

Next, all teaching staff attended a whole-school mid-cycle moderation meeting in Term 4, 2018. Teachers were allocated a 'peer moderations group' (PMG) and were provided with a 'moderation pack' prior to the meeting, which informed them about the purpose of the meeting, their role in the NCCD, their role in the moderation meeting, and resources to support decision-making processes regarding disability categories and levels of adjustment. At the meeting, teachers were directed through a series of steps and worked in their pre-allocated PMG consisting of class and specialist subject teachers to identify categories of disability and levels of adjustments that had been made during the period August–November for students with disability. Teachers referred to the evidence of adjustments they had collected using the temporary evidence collection system.

Subsequently, in January 2019, following the mid-cycle moderation meeting, a new electronic evidence collection tool using OneNote was launched and in-serviced as part of the annual Orana Steiner School staff conference. Teachers were asked to use the OneNote tool for collecting evidence of adjustments from this point onwards. Shared processes for developing ILPs was simultaneously implemented across the school.

As a next step, early in Term 2, the education support manager for the AISACT was invited to come to the school to perform a 'quality assurance check-in' with teachers in the primary school and answer any questions teachers had about the NCCD process.

A final moderation meeting using the PMG model was held in Week 10, Term 2, 2019, for the kindergarten and primary school using OneNote for the collection of evidence of adjustments. The high school made the decision to collect evidence of adjustments using an alternative evidence collection system and process. As such, the action research project continued to focus on the kindergarten and primary school only.

Data

Baseline data were collected through checklists of evidence collected in the mid-cycle moderation, ILPs, a teacher survey that teachers were invited to complete after attending the mid-cycle moderation meeting and completing the 2017–2018 student information sheets, which indicated the disability categories and levels of adjustment that had been selected in the previous NCCD cycle.

The data that were collected following the mid-cycle moderation showed that teachers were unclear about the types of evidence they needed to collect and what the purpose of the collection of evidence was.

Following the introduction of the OneNote tool, all teachers in the kindergarten and primary school were consistently and actively engaged in the process of collecting evidence of adjustments they were making for students with disability in their classrooms. The final moderation meeting engaged teachers directly in the process of using the evidence they had collected on OneNote to discuss disability categories and the levels of adjustment that had been made for their students in their PMGs. OneNote was then used to record the category of disability and adjustment level that had been decided on for each student so that the information was easily accessible to the NCCD school team delegate who collated the data for submission.

At the time of writing this article, teachers had not had the opportunity to complete a second post-moderation survey that would compare their experiences in the final moderation process to the mid-cycle moderation process. The teachers' descriptions of adjustments that had been made over a 10-week period or more for students on the OneNote tool indicated, however, that teachers' understanding about the purpose and process of NCCD had improved since the mid-cycle moderation. It was also evident from the teachers' engagement with the OneNote tool throughout the second half of the NCCD moderation cycle and observations of discussions that took place in PMGs that teachers were more accepting of their role in the NCCD process. They actively and successfully collaborated in the moderation meeting to make informed and considered decisions about students' disability categories and the levels of adjustment that had been made for them according to the evidence that had been collected on OneNote.

The implementation of a regular (twice in each NCCD cycle) and highly structured moderation process has made it possible to involve all teachers across the school in making decisions about disability categories and levels of adjustments that are being made for students with disability in their classrooms. By engaging all teachers in the process, we are seeing a shift from an outcomes-focused process to a student-focused process. Through the facilitation of effective collaboration in the moderation meetings, the NCCD process is starting to become viewed by teachers at Orana Steiner School as a shared responsibility.

Although this action research project focused on effective collaboration for the purposes of NCCD and not on the systems and tools that were used to support the NCCD process, ideally in the future the school will approach the NCCD process with a cohesive system by using one tool for collecting evidence of adjustments. This will further support the improvement of professional collaboration across the school and will aid the school's NCCD process so that whole-school improvements can occur in providing students with disability access to education on the same basis as other students.

Snapshot 4

Our Situation: Trinity Christian School

Trinity Christian School is a preschool to Year 12 school of about 1,150 students. It has been providing education for the past 40 years and is located in the southern part of Canberra. The school community consists of a wide variety of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. There are many students with varying needs that require ongoing support and management by all staff.

At Trinity Christian School, the current method of collection of evidence for students listed on the NCCD school entry was an area the school had decided to focus on as part of a commitment to continuous improvement of their practices in meeting the requirements specified by the government.

The nature of our challenge (why we participated)

Our first question was to ask, what were the current requirements for recording of evidence for NCCD and was the school meeting them? After initial investigation, some conclusions and questions were identified:

- Some areas of the school were already doing well, but this was not sufficient for the requirements.
- Gaps were identified.
- Changes to practices were recognised to ensure compliance.
- It was unclear as to who was going to be responsible for implementing the changes.
- How were these changes going to be applied?
- What training did the staff need?
- When, where and how were teachers expected to undertake the new system?

What we found

After the principal, director of learning and teaching and the director of studies completed the appropriate NCCD online modules, reviewed the policies and procedures already in place, and had discussions with the executive and key members of staff it was decided that there needed to be a review of NCCD processes at the school to improve the way data were collected and analysed.

A verbal survey of some teaching staff across all three schools was undertaken and found that there was an opportunity to improve staff knowledge of

- the requirements of NCCD for evidence collection
- what to record and language associated with recording evidence
- how and where data should be recorded.

Also, it was found that

- the current in-school data collection system was not being accessed regularly and was not easily accessible
- this system was not standardised across the three schools: junior (K–Year 5), middle (Year 6–8) and senior (Year 9–12) schools.

The goals we set (what we planned)

- Refined NCCD processes and procedures should be in place by the end of Term 1, 2019.
- By the beginning of Term 2, 2019, all staff should better understand the NCCD data collection process and begin to enter accurate and reliable records.

The strategies we trialled (what we did)

- The education support manager from the AISACT was consulted to help to identify possible ways forward with the process in our school.
- After the initial meeting, the school executive recognised there was a need for upskilling the teaching staff in the NCCD process.
- The education support manager was invited to speak to the whole-school leadership team to explain the compulsory obligations required by the school and the responsibilities of individual teachers.
- School executive made the decision that all teachers required an improved understanding of NCCD and therefore specific training.

- An external consultant in NCCD processes was engaged to work with the executive and later every staff member in small groups of three to four to walk them through the processes and requirements of NCCD.
- The purpose of the professional learning was to assist staff to feel confident with the collection of evidence so that they knew
  - what evidence to record
  - the language required in recording their evidence
  - how to make professional judgements as to the level of adjustment for individual students based on the data they had collected and recorded.

Subsequently, staff were informed about how, where and when to store the evidence on the school database for moderation by the newly formed NCCD moderation team. An NCCD moderation team was formed with staff from across the three schools to moderate all the NCCD data before it was to be submitted to the government.

The data we collected (what we found)
After the professional learning

- the data collected for moderation was of varying quality in language used and amount recorded. However, the majority of the decisions on level of adjustment according to the data collected were correct.
- the staff were asked to complete a survey about the professional learning after they had recorded their NCCD evidence for 2018–2019. The survey asked:
  1. Do you teach in the junior school or middle/senior school or both?
  2. Did you find the professional learning about NCCD with the consultant helpful?
  3. Did the professional learning help you to feel more confident in collecting data for NCCD and knowing how and where to record it?
  4. Do you feel confident in choosing the correct level of adjustment for each student?
  5. Are there any comments you would like to make about the professional learning on NCCD?
  6. Are there any comments you would like to make on how to improve the professional learning on NCCD?

What the data meant when we reflected on it (how it went)
After moderation by the NCCD moderation team, attendance at the ACT cross-sector moderation meetings and reviewing the results from the survey activity the following commendations and recommendations were made.

Commendations:
- Evidence collection at the school has improved (NCCD moderation team).
- A significant number of staff found the professional learning helpful, ranging from a moderate amount to very helpful (88.46%).
- Most staff feel more confident in recording evidence and making judgements of a student's level of adjustment (82.87%) and selecting the correct level of adjustment for their students (88.46%).
- At the moderation of NCCD meeting, it was noted that the school is on the correct trajectory in the level of recording and reporting of NCCD data (ACT cross-sectoral meetings).

Questions for future attention and recommendations from the activity:
- Is the modification system still valid and working, and if not, what is to be done to ensure these students are supported and are being offered all aspects of the curriculum on the same basis as students without disability?

- Can teachers have evidence samples and/or case studies to ensure they are correctly recording and identifying students?
- On the revised evidence collection form a tick-a-box checklist of adjustments has been made for students.
- A request for an accessible place on the student database indicating students are on the NCCD list.
- A place for recording data linked to the school database.
- An e-form accessible on the student database for requesting a new student be assessed for NCCD.

What we are doing now (going forward, where to from here)
- completing the reflection from NCCD modules to further refine recommendations
- providing a set of case studies and samples of completed NCCD evidence
- providing a list of appropriate evidence statements for each level of adjustment
- creating an e-form for identification of new students who need to be considered for NCCD
- identifying a NCCD centralised storage place on the school database for the collation of NCCD data for each student
- conducting a review of the 'modified' student process.

Reflections and Future Directions for This Action Research Project

This project has allowed AISACT the opportunity to provide specific, sustained and purposeful support to member schools. Initially, the focus was on supporting teachers and teams in management of the programs for students with disabilities. The transition to the use of NCCD data to determine funding for this group of students provided schools with challenges in the management of data, evidence, and whole-school practices as well as the implementation of quality learning programs for a broad range of students.

The 2018 validation process conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers provided evidence of the following areas for development across schools:

- The need for the management of supports and programs for students with additional needs was a whole-school issue and required engagement and support of staff and leaders at all levels.
- The need for students and families to be actively engaged in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation of programs.
- The need for evidence of planning, implementation and evaluation to be managed in a systematic and transparent way.

The AISACT Education Support Network, consisting of teachers and leaders from member schools, discussed the issues and complexities of these needs in the context of their schools as well as their student cohort. The use of a hybrid action research model in providing an innovative approach to support for schools as they worked through self-identified projects was proposed, endorsed and developed.

The project has proceeded as described and has resulted in broad ranging and positive results for teams and facilitators. In addition to the school-based outcomes, formal and informal feedback has validated and endorsed the model and has led to the second rollout of the project across 2019/2020. As a small organisation in a small territory, we have the capacity to bring individuals and teams together very easily, or for AISACT staff to visit schools for practical as well as reflective support. We are also able to make connections across schools that may not usually have similar needs.

It is important to note that while the umbrella of NCCD has been the framework for bringing the group together, the project has evolved to supporting teaching and learning outcomes for students, well

beyond the administrative requirements for NCCD. Although it is not possible here to detail specific data on improved student outcomes, participants have reported the trialling, adaptation and refinement of evidence-led strategies in response to SMART goals. As can be seen from the 2018/2019 snapshots, schools have embraced the project and been able to progress and refine their work in response to student and school priorities across a 12-month period. Our teams have acknowledged the ongoing nature of the work, rather than seeing the end of the project timeline as the end of their work. In this way, this model of professional learning has supported the real work of teachers and teams in responding to the needs of their students, including scaling up and actively adapting to emergent changes in their localised contexts. This approach has also led to conversations and new questions about how best to work together in meeting the needs of students with disability in diverse educational settings.

Clearly, change is both worthwhile and complex. It requires an interaction of several elements. These include but are not limited to key commitments and actions, systemic leadership and support, the role of critical reflection, ongoing coaching to facilitate this reflection and subsequent professional judgements, and systematic approaches to maintaining changes in the daily work of schools. In this project we have utilised hybrid action research protocols supported by professional learning to support this change process in schools. We hope this contribution will assist systems, schools and teachers to refresh their vision for positive change as part of the opportunities that arise for improving student learning outcomes through the NCCD program as it moves forward in the next few years.

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