

Cyprus Recommendations on Inclusive Assessment

More than 150 participants representing 29 countries met during the Conference 'Assessment in Inclusive Settings' organised jointly by the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture and the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, Limassol, Cyprus, 23rd and 24th October 2008. The conference was the end point of three years work examining assessment policy and practice that supports inclusion in mainstream settings.

This document is the result of their debates and collective conclusions and presents their recommendations to policy makers and practitioners for developing assessment processes that support inclusion.

The messages in this document are all in line with key international statements relating to disability and meeting special educational needs, for example the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006).

The Representatives assert that in all countries ...

... Assessment processes, procedures, methods and tools are a crucial factor in supporting the learning of all pupils, including pupils identified with special educational needs;

... Assessment can contribute, or alternatively hinder the process of inclusion. The development of assessment procedures and inclusive practice generally appear to be connected;

... Whilst recognising the role of diagnosis within assessment procedures, there is a need to shift the emphasis of SEN related assessment away from an over-reliance on initial identification linked to diagnosis and resource allocation (often conducted by people outside the mainstream school) to on-going assessment conducted by teachers and other professionals, that directly guides and informs teaching and learning;

... There is a need to develop systems of on-going, formative assessment that are effective for mainstream schools: giving schools and class teachers the tools to take responsibility for assessing the learning of all pupils including pupils with special educational needs and furthermore initially identifying the special needs of other pupils.

The Representatives agree ...

... Upon the concept of *Inclusive Assessment*. An approach to assessment in all educational settings where policy and practice are designed to promote the learning of all pupils as far as possible;

... That the overall goal of inclusive assessment is that all assessment policies and procedures should support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation - physical, social and academic - of all pupils including pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion and especially pupils with special educational needs;

... That the principles underpinning inclusive assessment are:

- All assessment procedures should focus on informing and promoting learning;
- Pupils should be entitled to inform assessment procedures in which they are participants;
- All pupils should be entitled to be part of assessment procedures that are reliable, valid

and accommodated to meet the specific needs of individual pupils;

- All assessment procedures should be constructed using the principles of universal design so that they give all pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their learning achievements, skills and knowledge;
- The needs of pupils with special educational needs should be considered and accounted for within all general as well as special education specific assessment policies;
- All assessment procedures should be complementary and inform each other;
- All assessment procedures should aim to take into full account and also celebrate diversity by identifying and valuing all pupils' individual learning progress and achievements;
- All assessment procedures should be coherent, co-ordinated and guided by the goal of supporting learning and teaching;
- Inclusive assessment explicitly aims to prevent segregation by avoiding - as far as possible - forms of labelling and by focussing on learning and teaching practice that promotes inclusion.

... That innovative practice in inclusive assessment demonstrates good assessment practice for all pupils;

... That *Assessment for Learning* - a means by which pupils reflect on their own learning and are engaged in an interactive 'feedback loop' with their teachers in order to jointly plan next steps in their learning - is an approach that supports Inclusive Assessment.

The Representatives recommend that ...

... All pupils are involved in and have opportunities to influence their own assessment and the development, implementation and evaluation of their own learning targets and plans (individual education plan or similar tool);

... Parents are involved in and have opportunities to influence all assessment procedures involving their child;

... Teachers use assessment for learning as a means of improving learning opportunities for all pupils. This involves setting goals/targets for and with pupils (in relation to effective teaching strategies for a specific pupil) as well as for themselves. It also involves providing feedback on learning to pupils in a way that meets their needs and supports their learning;

... Schools implement an assessment plan that describes the purposes and use, roles and responsibilities for assessment as well as a clear statement on how assessment is used to support the diverse needs of all pupils;

... Multi-disciplinary assessment teams - no matter what their professional composition or team membership - work to support inclusion and teaching and learning processes for all pupils;

... Assessment policies and procedures support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils including pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion, particularly pupils with special educational needs;

... Assessment legislation should promote the effective implementation of inclusive assessment at all times.

Limassol, Cyprus, October 2008