

## FAQs - For Therapists

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Collaborative partnership between teachers, relevant service providers, the student and parents/carers is important to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities can best be met. To support that process the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been compiled for therapists who can assist teachers to provide educational support programs and to facilitate access for students with disabilities to the curriculum.

### **What advice would you give a therapist to aid building a collaborative partnership with a classroom teacher?**

Adopt a family-centred approach and firstly meet with a child and their family to determine goals that will support a child's participation and independence. Next engage with the teacher and take time to observe how the child with a disability functions within the classroom, while recognising that the teacher's role is to provide appropriate educational support programs to achieve optimal outcomes for **all** students.

Any advice or input you can provide to the classroom teacher that will support a child with a disability accessing the curriculum alongside other students and achieving educational objectives is likely to be well received. Conversely, if you focus on therapy goals that are not well linked to educational objectives it will be more difficult to build a collaborative partnership with the teacher because he/she may view your input as unhelpful and not supportive of their role within the classroom.

To ensure your work with a child with a disability within the school environment is most effective a therapist requires good communication, negotiation and advocacy skills. Such skills will assist you in developing and maintaining a good working relationship with the classroom teacher and other service providers who may be involved.

### **What is a documented plan?**

This is a support document for teachers, which is used to plan, monitor, assess and evaluate a student's teaching and learning program. Of the different types of documented plans, therapists are most likely to be invited to collaborate in preparation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Behaviour Management Plan (IBMP).

The plan will include information about the student and their strengths and goals, which may be educational, physical, behavioural and/or emotional and linked to specific outcomes and teaching and learning adjustments. The plan is the responsibility of the classroom teacher and needs to be realistic, practical and easily understood by all those involved. With parental permission a documented plan can be distributed to all those involved with the student.

### **Who should have a documented plan?**

Students with disabilities who are eligible for, or receiving extra resources through the Schools Plus Program require a documented plan. In addition, any student who is considered to be vulnerable and at educational risk will also have a documented plan.

### **What is the Schools Plus Program?**

This program provides resources to schools to support a model of informed practice. Following assessment of educational need, the [Schools Plus Program](#) can provide services to eligible students to assist teaching adjustments and attainment of planned learning outcomes.

For eligible students an online checklist must be submitted by the school for resource allocation. Following allocation, it is up to the school to determine how resources are utilised to achieve the best outcomes for individual students.

## What is the role of the Education Assistant

An Education Assistant (EA) performs a range of duties under the direction of the teacher. So although a child may have an EA assigned, the teacher still remains responsible for the child's learning. Therefore, it is important for the therapist to liaise with the teacher, not just the EA so that lines of communication are maintained.

## Can you tell me more about the Education Department's Statewide Specialist Services?

The Education Department provides [Statewide Specialist Services](#) to support students with disabilities and diverse learning needs. The services are provided by a range of visiting teachers, support officers and other consultants from the Centre for Inclusive Schooling, Hospital School Services, Vision Education Service and the WA Institute for Deaf Education. In addition, district education offices collaborate to provide specialist support to school communities.

## What is the role of Hospital School Services?

[Hospital School Services](#) (HSS) provides educational support for students whose physical or mental health prevents them from successfully participating in their own school programs and is available to both public and private school students.

HSS operate a range of over 40 teaching and liaison programs in over 20 Department of Health settings. HSS has a service protocol with Fremantle Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital - Wellington Street Campus and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, but schools can refer students who are in other hospitals, where HSS does not have a teacher based. In addition, external referrals can also be made through HSS administration.

## What resources does the Centre for Inclusive Schooling (CIS) provide?

[The Centre for Inclusive Schooling](#) (CIS) is part of the Education Department's Statewide Specialist Services and has specialist teams who provide direct support to districts and schools for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. The CIS can only become involved with a student if they have been referred by a teacher. In addition the CIS has an online portal that provides:

- Teachers and school communities with access to professional learning opportunities
- Access to teaching and learning materials including the CIS library catalogue
- Online support for CIS specialist teams
- Links to related services and support materials

## How can a therapist contribute to the loan or purchase of equipment for use in the classroom by students?

All service providers involved with a child may suggest equipment needs. These will be evaluated by therapists in conjunction with the classroom teacher, parent and any other service providers who are involved. In particular you should consult with the visiting teacher regarding the common use list of equipment before ordering equipment for use in school.

Ideally equipment that is recommended for a student will be trialled prior to purchase. Visiting teachers have a resource centre that can assist access and funding for equipment loans that help a student access the curriculum. However, equipment for therapy needs only will not be funded by the visiting teacher service, so consult with your therapy supervisor to discuss funding options for such equipment. Other avenues to source equipment include the [Independent Living Centre](#) and the Community Aids and Equipment Program (CAEP) for people with long-term disability.