Expanding Inclusion Works

A whole-school approach to building inclusive classrooms



Learning for Life
AUTISM CENTRE INC

think impact

A Social Return on Investment forecast analysis by Think Impact

The daily challenges facing Australian classrooms

In Australian primary schools, a growing number of children are identified as requiring additional learning support. At the same time, teachers are navigating increasingly complex classroom needs with limited time and support, leaving many to feel overwhelmed, burnt out and at risk of leaving the teaching profession.

For students, inclusive education is needed now more than ever

Nearly one in five students require some form of specialised support to access the primary school curriculum.[1] Even with funded learning support, children with high needs learn best in classrooms that are truly inclusive and responsive to them.

Many more students require additional support to learn effectively due to social or emotional challenges, trauma, sensory impairments or a difficulty with concentration and focus.

Without an inclusive classroom, these students are at risk of being under-supported, excluded and isolated from their learning environment, and ultimately prevented from reaching their full potential.

At the same time, there is no current support for teachers to deliver inclusive education

> **So many kids with needs don't get additional support, so building the skills of classroom teachers catches the children that don't get funding.** – Principal

Teachers are often overwhelmed. Limited time, high workloads and a lack of specialised training in classroom management make it difficult to adapt classroom practice to meet diverse needs.

More than half of educators in Victoria said they did not have the support, training and resources they needed to teach students with disabilities and additional learning needs.[2]

> **Classroom management is half the battle, you can be the best at delivering content, but kids are not ready to learn.**
> – Classroom teacher

Many teachers feel underprepared to support the increasing diversity of learning needs in their classrooms. University programs provide limited coursework on inclusive education, leaving teachers without the practical preparation needed to handle the realities of modern teaching.

The lack of consistent, ongoing professional development for teachers to meet evolving classroom needs is a key factor behind teacher burnout, which results in many leaving the teaching profession.

> **[All it takes is] a year of bad experience – the child gets stigmatised, teachers get anxious, that is how the burnout happens.**
> – Principal

[1] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
[2] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Held back: The experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian schools (2017)



The opportunity

Every child deserves the chance to learn, to belong and to thrive. Every educator deserves the tools to make that happen.

Inclusion Works is Learning for Life's flagship program that responds to a key unmet professional development need for teachers and equips them with the right toolkit to meet diverse classroom needs.

The program has already demonstrated strong outcomes in 11 primary schools in Melbourne and are seeking support to expand Inclusion Works to:

- eight more primary schools in Melbourne
- early childhood education settings.

> **This will benefit not only teachers participating in the program but also create significant benefits for all students in an Inclusion Works classroom, including those with higher learning needs, their families and the wider school leadership.**



What is Inclusion Works?

Inclusion Works is a 12-month program where a multidisciplinary team works with teaching teams to provide:

- **Whole-school coaching:** Learning for Life's staff work closely with school leadership and teaching teams throughout the year, adapting support to context and capacity.
- **Comprehensive mapping of inclusive education practices** that align with the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM 2.0).
- **Evidence-based strategies:** Educators are guided to implement validated inclusive practices that support a diverse range of learning needs.
- **Customised tools and resources:** Each school receives adaptable materials tailored to student cohorts, teacher experience levels and specific challenges.
- **Continuous data collection and evaluation:** Regular monitoring of student engagement, classroom practice and teacher confidence to assess and strengthen impact.

Sustained **coaching and inclusive education resources** for teachers → Teachers incorporate **inclusive practices in the classroom** → Increased **confidence** and ability to **manage classroom needs** → Increased **calm, group cohesion** and **concentration** in classrooms → **Enhanced learning outcomes for all students**

The value of expanding Inclusion Works

> **Before the program I didn't feel equipped ... the program helped me to engage with kids with additional needs ... and more purposefully.** – Classroom teacher

Expanding Inclusion Works into eight more primary schools is estimated to generate **$3.5 million** of social and economic value. For each participating school that is nearly $411,000 of social value, plus over $250,000 of value to the Victorian Government.

For every dollar invested in Inclusion Works, over **$12** of social and economic value will be created for teachers, students, their families, the school leadership and government.

Value for the Government

By providing teachers with professional development to strengthen inclusive teaching practice, Inclusion Works delivers significant value in preventing burnout and supporting teachers to stay longer in the profession. This delivers $32,000 of value per school participating to the Victorian Department of Education through the avoided cost of recruitment.

> **Early retirement and burnout is real ... we are really protective of our experienced teachers ... [the opportunity] to still learn might mean [our experienced teachers] stay for another year or two.** – Principal

$1 **investment in Inclusion Works**

$12 social and economic value will be created



44% experienced by teachers

48% experienced by children

7% experienced by Government

These values are based on a forecast Social Return on Investment analysis of expanding the Inclusion Works program into eight primary schools. The analysis draws on data from an in-progress PhD study of the program and the perspectives of past participants, and includes assumptions about program uptake, participation and outcomes of an expanded program.



Value for teachers

Teachers participating in Inclusion Works can experience greater confidence and satisfaction in their teaching, as well as reduced burnout and opportunities for expanded career pathways.

The program provides them with the inclusive teaching skillset to lead modern classrooms with confidence, supporting the full diversity of learners and strengthening outcomes for all students.

The program also influences the school culture, and teachers shared that they feel a greater sense of belonging and commitment to their workplace from a more inclusive school culture.

> **I enjoy it [teaching] a lot more, [I am] less stressed, I feel like I can have more control that I didn't have previously.**
> – Classroom teacher

This results in a calmer classroom and more supported learning environment for all students.

Value for students

> **I felt like I could teach – and that is what it comes down to, I have more focus on others in the classroom.** – Classroom teacher

Inclusion Works allows classroom teachers to nominate a student with higher needs to focus on throughout the program. Students receiving 1 to 1 support can benefit from more effective learning, improved emotional wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging from being in a more inclusive classroom. They experience improved concentration and engagement in the classroom, which enables better numeracy and literacy outcomes.

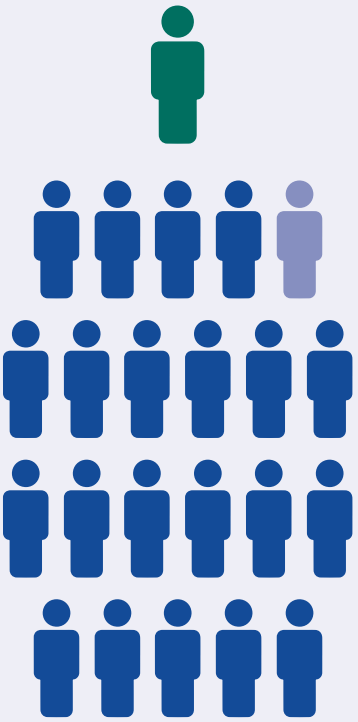
Other students in the classroom also experience reduced environmental stressors and more effective learning, benefiting from being in a calmer, less disruptive classroom.

These benefits to students are also noticed by their families and carers.

> **Parents have told us, 'I've seen a change ... [my child] enjoys being in the class and wants to be there.'** – Classroom teacher

THE SOCIAL VALUE CREATED IN A CLASSROOM

For every classroom with an Inclusion Works trained teacher, **over $40,000 of social value will be created.**



The teacher will experience **$19,500** of social value.

The student receiving 1 to 1 support will experience **$10,100** of social value.

21 students will experience **$504 each** of social value.

Investing in the future of learning

We seek your support to make inclusion a reality in every Victorian classroom and early learning community – where educators are supported to help every child thrive.

In FY27, we are working to bring Inclusion Works to more school communities in Victoria. We will:

- expand Inclusion Works to eight new primary schools
- pilot a Kindergarten stream in early years settings and deliver earlier intervention.

Through this, we will:

- Train 200+ educators.
- Positively impact 1,000+ students
- Build internal delivery capacity and strategic partnerships.
- Develop a pathway for national expansion.

At the same time, we will deliver more than $12 of social and economic value to communities for every dollar invested in this program – ensuring teachers are better equipped to support all children to realise their full potential.

We seek to partner with progressive organisations to co-create an inclusive education system that supports educators to deliver inclusive teaching in every school, strengthens learning outcomes for all children, and builds more connected and equitable school communities.

Find out more

For further information, please contact
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