

New Perspectives Project 2012-2013

Independent Schools Queensland

The Learning Support department has been given the opportunity to participate in a project through Independent Schools Queensland entitled “New Perspectives”. Our goal is to promote the health and wellbeing of our students through exploring topics of interest to parents and ways to provide better access to information and community support networks. We have named our project “Family Matters” and would like all our college families to benefit across both campuses.

In order to initiate this project we established a steering committee of parent and community representatives by invitation. The committee helped us to identify and accomplish some of our aims in a practical way. After our first couple of meetings, the parents on the committee suggested the name PIECE standing for Parents for Inclusive Education for Children who are Extraordinary/Exceptional. A logo was designed by Lindie Brengman and together with the name, was adopted by the committee.

Background Information

To address the need and explore issues of special education in the mainstream classroom, Dr. Scott Prasser developed “Students with Disabilities in Queensland Independent Schools: Equity for All” which provided the focus for discussion at a Think Tank held in 2009. Following on from this activity Independent Schools Queensland has chosen to address the challenge of enhancing productivity of students with disabilities in the mainstream through a project entitled “New Perspectives”.

The New Perspectives Project aims to mobilise independent school communities to develop ‘new’ ways to enhance learning outcomes for students with disabilities by:

- exposing school community members to new ways of thinking about inclusivity
- empowering the school community to amplify inclusive school culture
- creating different communication channels with parents
- building a community ‘hub’ where all members of the school community can connect
- development of and participation in professional learning
- forming partnerships and other collaborations with community organisations
- strengthening links between the school and local community

This project is funded under the Commonwealth Government Literacy Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN), More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSWD) and the State Government Students with Disabilities (SWD) program. Over 1900 students with disabilities and learning difficulties are supported in independent schools in Queensland.

Timeline

The project runs from March to November 2012 & extended to November 2013. We envisaged that the benefits of what we can establish in this timeframe will extend well beyond this date.

These are some of our goals:

- ❖ Establish a parent library as well as online resources that cover topics that are relevant to parents of children with disabilities and other special needs. Celebrate the launch of this facility with a social function.
- ❖ Organise parenting workshops / seminars that will be relevant to all parents empowering them with knowledge and practical information. Invite well known guest speakers and community workers.
- ❖ Involve community representatives in planning and through incorporating displays at Seminars /workshops. Regular updates of online information. Provide the opportunity to evaluate our accomplishments.
- ❖ Establish informal parent to parent support groups.
- ❖ Promote improved understanding and empathy towards students with disabilities amongst teaching staff.
- ❖ Provide child minding services to parents to enable them to attend functions.

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