

Australia-wide autism report calls for 'agile' response in classrooms

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A report investigating the educational needs of students with autism has identified social and emotional needs as the top priority to ensure success at school.

The Australian Educational Needs Analysis report was released at the ASPECT Autism in education conference in Melbourne's Convention & Exhibition Centre on Friday May 6.

With an increase in the numbers of children diagnosed with autism in the past 10 years, the report indicated a high rate of exclusion with social and academic needs not often understood or supported.

The landmark two-year study, commissioned by Autism CRC, surveyed 1500 people including teachers, other school staff, students on the spectrum along with their parents and carers across Australia.

Led by QUT's Faculty of Education Dr Beth Sagers and Professor Suzanne Carrington, the research found teachers needed more support to provide inclusive classrooms.

"A one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with autistic children is not effective," Professor Carrington said.

"Autism is just one area of diversity and the research demonstrated the need for schools to be flexible and agile to children's needs and often other students also benefit."

Dr Sagers said the research also highlighted issues and obstacles children faced during their schooling years but also emphasized the difficulties teachers experienced in trying to successfully meet their needs.

"Parents, educators, [students](#) and specialists surveyed overwhelmingly indicated social emotional wellbeing as an essential element in the successful schooling for autistic children," she said.

"Autistic [children](#) vary in their intellectual abilities and may find it difficult to plan and organize their time, cope with change, manage the social context of the [school](#) environment and at times stay calm and regulate their emotions.

"By promoting social competence and social emotional wellbeing, providing positive behavior support, assisting with planning and organizing, using technology, the individual needs of a child with [autism](#) can be addressed.

"This helps to positively influence their participation and engagement within the classroom environment."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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