



Enabling Good Lives

Enabling Good Lives in Education

When EGL principles are embedded in educational settings, they allow for a genuinely inclusive, accessible, and mana enhancing educational experience for every disabled person and their whānau, irrespective of disability, perceived level of needs, adequacy or inadequacy of specialist supports and resources. Authentic choice and control over one's learning and educational journey through an EGL approach can significantly impact longer term life outcomes for disabled people, including employment opportunities, career pathways, meaningful relationships, full participation in the community, and effective citizenship; all of which are key aspects of living a good life.

Understanding EGL principles in the educational context:

Self-determination refers to disabled learners¹ and their whānau having voice and agency as they access educational opportunities throughout their life span, across a range of settings. Self-determination ensures that disabled learners have choice and control over the types/level of supports, accommodations, and adaptations they receive, and that they fully participate in their learning journey to achieve their highest potential and aspire towards creating a good purposeful life.

Beginning early implies that whenever disabled learners, their whānau or educators recognise a need for learning supports, accommodation, and adaptations, these will be provided as soon as possible without unnecessary barriers such as lengthy assessments, procurement processes, and waitlists. Early intervention and ensuring smooth transitions are essential across various life stages of disabled learners and allows them to aspire and envision a good meaningful life for themselves.

Person-centred means that disabled learners and their whānau will remain at the centre of all planning and decision making throughout their educational journey; and all learning/teaching will meet individual needs, interests, strengths, goals and aspirations. Educational systems and environments will offer individualised supports, communication and teaching strategies that meet disabled learners' capability and learning needs; and value disabled learners vision and priorities.

Ordinary life outcomes mean disabled learners will have the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled whānau, friends, neighbours and community peers, which prepare them for participation in their local communities, the workforce, and allow fulfilment of their roles/ responsibilities as a valued and contributing citizen in society. Education will be available and accessible in everyday places and spaces for all disabled learners.

Mainstream first means disabled learners and their whānau will be able to choose their local community mainstream education options freely and confidently. Principles of universal design will be embedded across education settings and wider community to ensure inclusion. In addition, education providers will commit resources to ensure full participation, accessibility, accommodations, and adaptations across educational settings; and train staff to offer quality inclusive learning opportunities.

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the term disabled learners include disabled people across all stages of life and education settings, including early childhood, language nests, schooling pathways, kura kaupapa Maori, tertiary, wānanga, university, vocational, and adult education opportunities.

Mana enhancing principle means learning experiences and education for disabled learners will acknowledge and highlight their strengths, interests, abilities, aspirations and cultures in inclusive learning environments. Disabled learners and their whānau will be respected, treated with dignity, valued and celebrated, so they may develop strong positive identities and a sense of belonging within their educational setting and wider community.

Easy to use means disabled learners will have access to an education system, curriculum and supports that are simple to use, flexible, and adaptable; and that everyone including learners, whānau and educators are well informed about the availability, accessibility, and adaptability of these. Implementation of this principle in practice will result in removal of barriers to learning, provision of assistive technology and equipment, and universal design principles to promote inclusion.

Relationship building when done effectively and authentically will allow for collaborative, respectful, culturally responsive partnerships which are essential for full participation and successful educational outcomes for disabled learners and their whānau.

What can you do now?

As disabled learners journey through the education system and become more capable and independent, their whānau and allies can play an important role in supporting them to uphold their mana, voice and agency across their educational experiences and settings.

There are various legislative frameworks and guidelines that support the rights of disabled people to inclusive high-quality education in Aotearoa New Zealand, all of which align with the EGL principles. Three such key legislative frameworks are the [Education & Training Act 2020](#), [NZ Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026, Outcome 1 - Education](#), and [UNCRPD article 24](#). EGL approach in education ensures respect for the evolving capacities and identities of disabled children as stated in [article 3, principle 8 of the UNCRPD](#).

Given that successful inclusion in education can significantly impact long-term life outcomes, it is important that disabled learners, their whānau and allies, take up a proactive role in introducing and embedding EGL principles across educational spaces.

Here are some ways in which disabled learners, whānau and carers can do this:

1. Start using the EGL principles and language in your relevant educational settings, and across all interactions with educators, professionals and education service providers.
2. Express your desire for EGL principles to be the foundational principles for all engagement, communication and decision making about all learning and education related experiences
3. Share information about [EGL principles, vision and characteristics](#) with educators, support staff, specialists, leadership/governance teams in your educational setting, and your local Ministry of Education office/staff.
4. Write to your education governance boards and inquire with them how they intend to adopt and give regard to EGL principles and vision within their education spaces, policies and practices. Offer to meet and share more information with them about what EGL principles mean to you and your whānau.

5. Establish/participate in core community groups and regional leadership groups, to discuss with other disabled people and whānau how you can embed EGL in education within your local community/regional spaces and influence other education agencies and Ministry of Education to do so.

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