



# Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

**What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?**  
Module 4 Workbook



Nāku to rourou  
nāu te rourou  
ka ora ai te ākongā.

With my basket and  
your basket the  
learner will thrive.

Published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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## About this resource

### Background

*Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* is a set of modules that teachers and teacher aides complete together.

Each module in this series is a 'ready-to-use' pack with a presentation, workbook and activities so learning can be put into practice. Some modules include self-paced e-learning. The module materials come in different formats to allow choice about how you learn.

Find out more at [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#).

The modules follow an inquiry cycle. The workbook has a section for each step in the cycle.



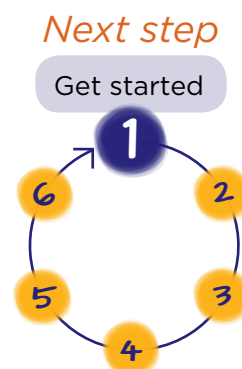
If you are leading the learning, refer to the [Facilitator Quick Guide](#) and gather any additional materials needed to complete the activities.

Download the learning materials from the [Module 4 page](#) of the Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together site.

Note that you have some choices about how you access the module materials. This is the PDF workbook format. It includes links to required resources and printable worksheets for the activities. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version to activate the links.

For an enhanced online reading experience, access the [e-workbook for Module 4](#). In the e-workbook, activity sheets are Google Docs that you can print, download as Word documents or copy to your own Google Drive for working online.

You also have the option to download a PowerPoint or view a narrated presentation.





# 1. Get started

Start by watching the video. Then read the cartoon, quotes and key principles. They introduce the main ideas covered in this module. Discuss these as a group. The learning outcomes describe what you'll achieve once you've completed the six steps.

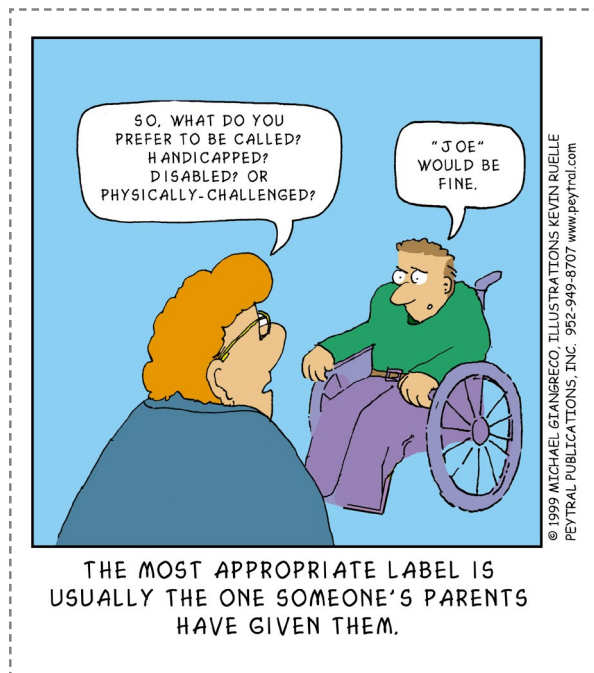


Watch the video about [My dreams and future plans](#) at the Ministry of Education's teacher aide Vimeo album.

“ To be honest I thought, goodness me, I've got a class of students who need help with reading and I've got [a student with] additional needs on top of that. How am I going to do this? I just had no knowledge of what to do and yeah, it was scary. ”  
*English teacher*

“ I think it comes from the heart. You have to believe in your heart that every student is important, and if that's the case, then that will be reflected in the way that you run the school. ”  
*Principal*

“ She's one of the most loving kids that I've ever had in my class; an absolute delight to have. And I appreciate the fact that for two years, I have benefited from that relationship with her. I don't think other people realise how much you get back and how much I learnt, which I'll always appreciate. ”  
*English teacher*



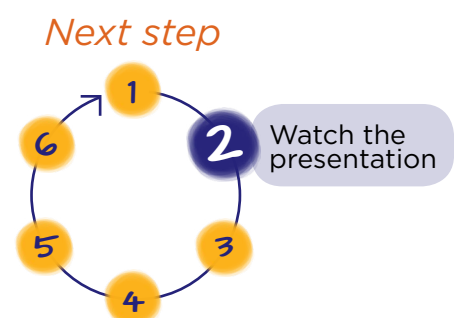
## Key principles

- People's beliefs and values determine how they see and work with others.
- By examining our beliefs and values about disability, we can identify our own assumptions that support inclusive practice. We can also identify any barriers we may create to students' ability to participate and learn. It's necessary to identify these assumptions and barriers before we can start changing our attitudes, behaviour and ways of working.
- When teachers and teacher aides think everyone is a capable learner, they provide opportunities for everyone to participate and learn.
- When teachers and teacher aides get to know a student well, they are more likely to see the student as a whole person who is competent and capable.
- When educators expect a student to succeed, it is more likely the student will succeed. Having high expectations is important.
- Teachers and teacher aides show they value diversity and students' language, identity and culture when these are reflected in teaching and learning.
- In inclusive communities, everyone is both a teacher and a learner – people learn from each other.

## Learning outcomes

This module is intended to support teachers and teacher aides to achieve four aims.

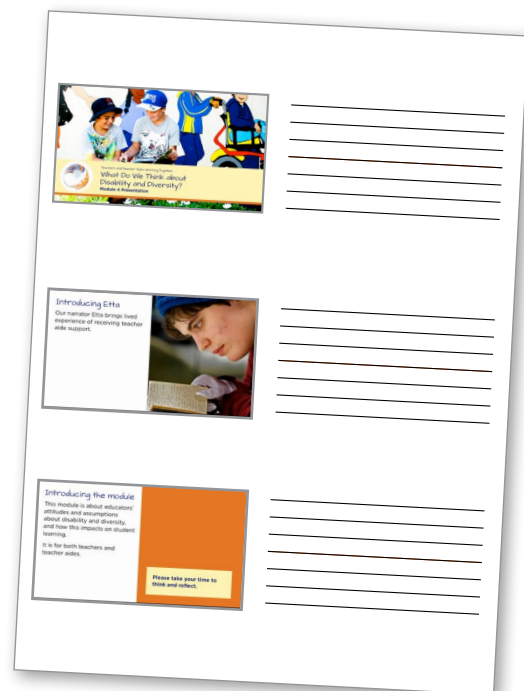
1. Examine and articulate their key beliefs and assumptions about diversity.
2. Examine their own practice and identify ways their beliefs can support or challenge their relationships with students.
3. Try a strategy for adjusting the way they view, respond to or work with a student.
4. Reflect on and evaluate what they have tried, using the questions in this module.



## 2. Watch the presentation

Watch the presentation about examining our beliefs and assumptions about disability. Read the discussion on the next pages for further information.

Visit the [Module 4 e-workbook](#) to download or watch the presentation.



### Further information

#### Why this module?

We each bring our own values and beliefs to our work. We may not even be aware of the ways we think about people and how these thoughts can affect what we do and say. Thinking about and recognising our assumptions about disability and difference can strengthen our work in schools – with students and with colleagues. Our assumptions about disability and diversity can support inclusive practice, but they can also create barriers to students participating and learning.

#### Examining our beliefs

All learners are active, capable and competent. If we think a student is not capable, we tend to remove opportunities for that student to try the same activities as their peers. Recognising beliefs about disability and diversity can strengthen educators' work. When teachers and teacher aides think everyone is a capable learner, they provide opportunities for everyone to participate and learn. Doing this well may require changes in people's attitudes, behaviours and ways of working.

Ask yourself: *Are there times when I have prevented a student from trying the same activity as their peers? How might I have done that?*



## Getting to know students

Some students may learn differently to their peers but they are still active learners. When teachers and teacher aides get to know and develop a relationship with each student, they tend to look past a student's disability and see them as a whole person who is competent and capable.

Ask yourself: *How do I create opportunities for students to show me what they can do and what they love to do?*

## Having high expectations

The principles of inclusion align with the guiding principles of *The Māori Education Strategy: Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success 2013–2017*. *Ka Hikitia* states:

“ Students who expect and are expected to succeed are more likely to succeed. ”

Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 38

Teachers and teacher aides who have high expectations believe that all students can be successful, regardless of background or disability. This belief shows in their behaviour: they find ways and supports to help all their students grow and progress.

Where teachers and teacher aides are aware of low expectations, they work through a process of examining and changing their beliefs.

Ask yourself: *What are my expectations for students with additional learning needs? If they are less than for other students, why do I expect less? How can I show students I expect them to succeed?*

## Valuing diversity

Diversity is about ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender and first languages, as well as disability. When we value all people, we value difference as a strength. It's about acknowledging that identity, language and culture count.

“ Students do better in education when what and how they learn builds on what is familiar to them, and reflects and positively reinforces where they come from, what they value and what they already know. ”

Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 38

Ask yourself: *How are students' identities, languages and cultures reflected in the way I work with them and what we do? How do I connect with what they already know?*

## Ako: everyone is a teacher and a learner

When teachers and teacher aides recognise they are learners too, they recognise opportunities to learn from each other and from students and families and whānau.

“ Ako describes a teaching and learning relationship where the educator is also learning from the student in a two-way process. ”

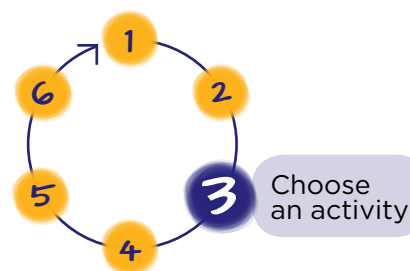
Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 38

Ask yourself: *How can we learn from each other? How can we learn from our students?*

## Reference

Ministry of Education. (2012). *The Māori Education Strategy: Ka Hikitia. Accelerating Success 2013–2017*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.  
[www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-maori-education-strategy-ka-hikitia-accelerating-success-20132017/](http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-maori-education-strategy-ka-hikitia-accelerating-success-20132017/)

Next step





## 3. Choose an activity

Choose one or two activities to do in pairs or small groups. Go to the back of the workbook for each activity's instructions, worksheets and resources.

### Activity 1

#### Presume competence

In this activity, you will read and discuss a short article about how our beliefs about people can get in the way of seeing them as they really are. The author, Kathie Snow, is a parent of a child with a disability and is a disability rights advocate.

### Activity 2

#### Do You See Me?

In this activity, you will read a poem written from the perspective of a student with a disability. You will discuss how we can learn about our students and look past their disabilities.

### Activity 3

#### In My Language – a short film

In this activity, you will watch a short film about a woman named Amanda. You will discuss your reaction to the film.



## Activity 4

### Walking in a student's shoes for a day

In this activity, you will write a diary for a typical day for a student in your class who needs additional support. You will compare this to a typical day for their peers.

## Activity 5

### Personal stories: Students' perceptions about disability and inclusion

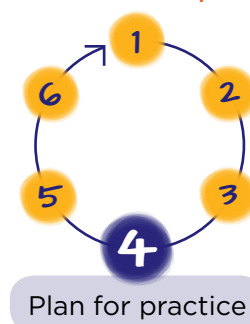
This activity is designed to generate further discussion about viewing all students who are blind, deafblind or have low vision as capable and competent.

## Activity 6

### Exploring online resources about effective practice

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Developing an inclusive classroom culture* on [Inclusive Education](#). You will consider ideas about having high expectations for all learners and celebrating successes.

*Next step*





## 4. Plan for practice

It's time to plan how you will put your learning into practice. Try one of these suggestions in your work together over the next few weeks.

- If you work with a student who has a home-school book, read some of the things you have written.
  - What do your comments reflect about your assumptions? For example, have you commented more about the student's physical care than about their learning?
  - What is the balance between comments about issues and those about successes?

How could you write about a student in their home-school book to show that you see the student as an active, capable learner?

- Try a new way of writing about the student in their home-school book over a few weeks.
- Draw a mindmap about a student you work with, for example, information about their whānau/family, likes and dislikes, friends, preferred subjects, what they're good at and dreams and aspirations.

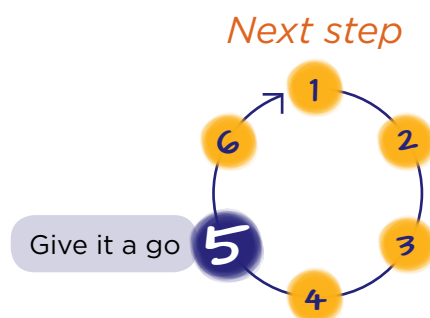
Talk about how you could find out one or two new things about this student.

Try this approach over a few weeks.

- Talk about how you reflect and celebrate what you know about a student when working with them.

Discuss how you could adapt your work to better reflect and celebrate the student's background, what they value and what they know.

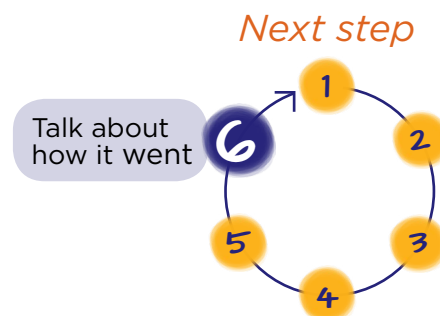
Try this in your work with the student over a few weeks.





## 5. Give it a go

Implement the strategy you decided on in Step 4. Use the space below to make notes about what you did and how it went.





## 6. Talk about how it went

Meet to talk about how the strategy from Step 4 went. Discuss and plan how you might adapt or modify your practice. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- What did we try?
- What happened when we did this? How did the students respond to the strategy? How did the adults experience and respond to the strategy?
- How might we change our practice next time?
- In what ways are we more aware of our views and assumptions about disability? Have our views changed in any way?
- To what extent do we see all students in our class as active, capable learners? How do we show this?
- How would our students know that we see them as active, capable learners?

### Possible next steps

When thinking about what you might do next, consider the other topics in this series:

- Teachers and Teacher Aides: Who Does What?
- Keeping Our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe
- Supporting Students with Complex Needs
- Identifying Students' Strengths
- Students Participating in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum
- Fostering Peer Relationships
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms
- Supporting Student Learning in the Whole Class
- Teacher Aide Interaction that Supports Student Learning

Visit [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) to access these modules.



# Activity options

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## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### *Presume competence*

### *Activity 1*

In this activity, read and discuss a short article about how our beliefs about people can get in the way of seeing them as they really are. The author, Kathie Snow, is a parent of a child with a disability and is a disability rights advocate.



Working individually to begin with, read Kathie Snow's article *Presume Competence*. As you read, highlight any information that is new or interesting.

Download the article from:

<https://www.disabilityisnatural.com/presume-comp-1.html>



After you have read the article, work in pairs or small groups to discuss anything you highlighted.

Use these questions to guide discussion:

- How do we really get to know all our students? How do we get to know our students' strengths, passions and interests?
- What visions do we see for our students as adults in our community?
- How do we recognise our students' strengths and experiences?
- What are the planning implications for our students?
- How do we support each other to show our strengths, too?



## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### *Do You See Me?*

### *Activity 2*

In this activity, read a poem written from the perspective of a student with a disability. Discuss how we can learn about our students and look past their disabilities.



Working individually to begin with, read Abby de Groot's poem (see over). Abby wrote this poem for a university assignment. She presented the poem on a pink balloon. Abby did this to symbolise how people see disability before they see the person - the balloon hovers over her head like a label.



After reading the poem, work in pairs or small groups to talk about it.

Use these questions to guide discussion:

- How can we learn more about the students we work with?
- How do we think the students we work with want to be known?

## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### Do You See Me? (continued)

### Activity 2

#### "Do you see me

"Do you see me  
Can you hear me  
Are you aware of me and not my labeled box  
and forced understanding  
Do you know my name  
My hobbies  
My thoughts, feelings and goals  
Have you stopped, paused and waited to hear what my needs are  
NO!

You see a disability, a problem, not a perfect child  
You hear medication, specialists and characteristics  
You are aware of the noises I make, the actions I do, the problems  
and disturbances I cause  
You think I don't know my reading books, my maths sheets  
and the tones  
you use are different  
You think the desk you sat me at allows me to be included but what is  
welcoming about isolation  
Please don't see me as different because nobody is the same  
You think you know what's best, how I learn and what I need to know  
But you don't know me  
You know my label; you know how to contain me,  
deal with me and hide me  
My name is Laura  
My hobby is art  
My thought feelings and goals are for you to discover  
through listening  
Remove the label Untie the box And  
Stop, look and listen  
Do you see me  
Can you hear me  
Only then can you teach me."



Abby de Groot, 2010 in Carrington et al., 2012, p.28

Source: Carrington, S.B., MacArthur, J., Kearney, A., Kimber, M., Mercer, L., Morton, M., & Rutherford, G. (2012). Towards an inclusive education for all. In S.B. Carrington & J. MacArthur (Eds.). *Teaching in inclusive school communities*. John Wiley & Sons: Milton, Qld Australia, pp. 3-38.

## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### *In My Language - a short film*

### *Activity 3*

In this activity, you will watch a short film about a woman named Amanda. Carefully follow the instructions after watching the film.



As a group, watch the short film, *In My Language*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnyIM1hI2jc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnyIM1hI2jc)  
Pause the film at 3 mins, 13 secs.



In pairs or small groups, discuss these questions:

- What are your reactions to the film so far?
- When you think about Amanda, what words come to mind?



Return to the large group and watch the rest of the film.



Discuss the film in a group or in pairs.

Use these prompts to guide your discussion:

- Talk about your reaction to the film as a whole. It can help to acknowledge that this is not an 'easy' film to watch. Did your impression of Amanda change as you watched?
- Other people have made comments such as: "I was embarrassed to think she couldn't speak or think for herself." "I felt ashamed that I didn't think she was fully human." "I felt uncomfortable watching her. I didn't see the point of her life in the first part of the film." What did these people notice about themselves? Why do you think they thought this way?

## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### *Walking in a student's shoes for a day*

### *Activity 4*

Write a diary for a typical day for a student in your class who needs additional support. Compare this with a typical day for their peers. This activity works best when done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.



Working in pairs or small groups, think about a student you work with. Talk about what their usual school day is like.



Write a diary for a typical school day for the student that shows:

- where the student is in the school, such as in the classroom, in a one-to-one room, not at school for a certain part of the day
- who the student is with, for example, with other students their age, with a small group of similar students, on their own, with a teacher aide
- what the student is doing in class, for example, the same work as their peers, an individualised programme.



Once you have written the diary, discuss these questions:

- How similar is this student's day to that of other students in the classroom or to that of other students of the same age?
- Who is the student interacting with most? Adults or students? Which adults? Is this the same as their peers?
- What kinds of activities and learning contexts does the student access most? Is this the same as their peers?
- How can you use the student's strengths and interests so they are more engaged and participating with their peers?

## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

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### *Personal stories: Students' perceptions about disability and inclusion*

### *Activity 5*

This activity is designed to generate further discussion about viewing all students as capable and competent learners. It presents the perspectives of a diverse group of students.



View the video, [My World, My View](#). This video presents students' perceptions about disability and inclusion. It includes Brooklyn, Madeleine, Faithleen, Romeo, and Emmanuel. Discuss how this presentation helps you learn more about these five students. Discuss how students like Brooklyn, Madeleine, Faithleen, Romeo, and Emmanuel would like to be known.

### **Further information**

Attitude Live is a collection of documentaries that provides an insight into the lives of people who are living with disability. It tells the stories of people in New Zealand and around the world who are living full, active lives with disability."

## 4 What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?

### Exploring online resources about effective practice

## Activity 6

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Developing an inclusive classroom culture* on Inclusive Education. It covers ideas about having high expectations for all learners and celebrating successes.



Explore the section of the guide *Developing an inclusive classroom culture* under the tab, Have high expectations for all learners and celebrate their successes.



Discuss the content you have just explored.

To support your talk, consider these questions:

- What differences did you notice between the research, parent, teacher and student perspectives?
- What is the impact on students when those around them have high expectations?
- How are high expectations and celebration of student success shown at your school? What other ways could you demonstrate high expectations for all students and celebrate student success?



If you have questions about high expectations and celebrating student success at your school, talk about this activity with a member of the leadership team.