

Literature for Inclusion

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Natasha Milanko's **Literature for Inclusion** program provides picture books, curriculum support materials and professional learning to equip teachers with ways to discuss inclusion and disability within the junior primary English program. In 2012 her picture book *Tessa's Best Friend* was provided to all WA state primary schools. This book explores what it is like to have a disability through the eyes of Ella, a five-year-old girl with cerebral palsy.

Natasha Milanko wins awards for advocacy

In 2012 Natasha was awarded an Early Childhood Intervention Australia Excellence Award for making "... a significant contribution to the well being of families of young children with disabilities..." and a high commendation at the Disability Services Commission Count Me In Awards.



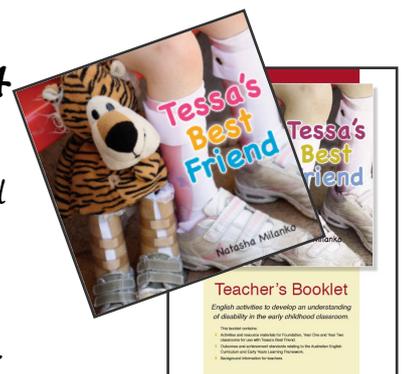
How Maggie's splints became "cool"



Maggie (6) was struggling to explain her disability to classmates without sounding defensive. She was also embarrassed to wear her splints as they made her feel "different". Maggie's teacher read *Tessa's Best Friend* to her class. She opened up a discussion about the similarities and differences between children with and without disabilities. Maggie's class were fascinated by Ella's story and impressed with Maggie as she was similar in lots of ways to Ella. The following day Maggie asked her teacher if they could read *Tessa's Best Friend* again. After they read the book Maggie stood up. "Any questions, anyone?" she asked confidently. Maggie is now wearing her splints to school every day!

Looking forward to "L. for I. Stage 2" in 2014

The second stage of *Literature for Inclusion* (in collaboration with School of Special Educational Needs – Disability) has been postponed until Term 1, 2014. This will see ten focus schools from the Department of Education provided with resources and professional learning about discussing inclusion with our junior primary students. Natasha can't wait to work with this wonderful group of students and educators.



Messages of inclusion getting through

Last year, a copy of *Tessa's Best Friend* and *Tessa's Best Friend Teacher's Booklet* was provided for every state primary school in WA. Natasha has been delighted to receive work samples from teachers who are using her curriculum support materials. In the sample below Drew (Year 1) has demonstrated his understanding of inclusion by showing that a child with a disability can participate in the community with the right aids and adaptations.

Ella and Me by Drew



It was a hot day and Ella and I were at the park. We played 'it'. Ella won. She is fast in that walker and then we had a picnic.

Date _____

Activity Sheet 4 Ella and Me

Tessa's Best Friend
TEACHER'S BOOKLET

Literature: Responding to Literature
 "Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students own experiences."
 (ACELT 1582)

Assessment

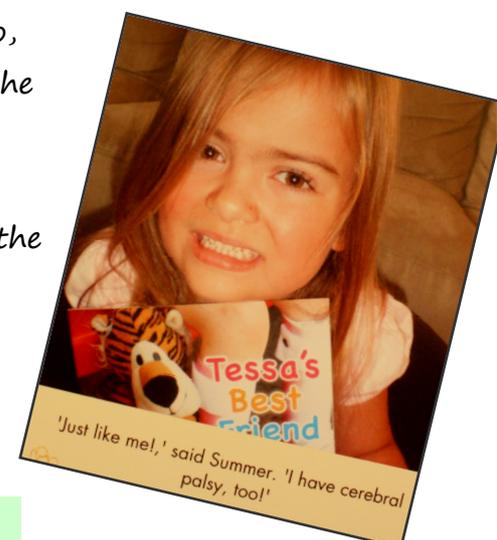
Relevant achievement standards

- Recall one or two events from texts with familiar topics.
- Identify connections between texts and their personal experience.
- In informal, group and whole class settings, students communicate clearly.

| | Achieved | Developing | Not developed |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|---------------|
| I can discuss how Ella was the same/different to me | ✓ | | |
| I shared my ideas with people in my group/class | ✓ | | |
| I drew a picture of myself with a character from the text | ✓ | | |

Just Like Me- two little girls share experiences of disability

Summer is a seven year old girl with cerebral palsy from Bendigo, Victoria. When Summer was given a copy of *Tessa's Best Friend* she was excited to see that the main character Ella and her shared many feelings and experiences. Summer's mum made a beautiful photo book "Just Like Me", to celebrate the similarities between the girls. Ella and Summer now exchange regular letters and keep each other updated about their progress.



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