

# **A Review and Synthesis of Educational Supports for Students with Disability: Evidence-Based Practices in Australia**

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# The Research Team



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# Context



Department of Education  
**Strategic Plan**  
2018-2022

<b>Our vision</b> <b>To be Australia's best education system and one of the finest in the world.</b>	<b>Our purpose</b> <b>To prepare young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society.</b>
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**About us**

Children and young people are at the centre of all our decision-making. We ensure young children get the best start in life by supporting and regulating the early childhood education and care sector.

We are the largest provider of public education in Australia with responsibility for delivering high-quality public education to two-thirds of the NSW student population. We respect and value Aboriginal people as Australia's First Nation Peoples. We also work closely with the non-government school and higher education sectors.

**Our goals**

1. All children make a strong start in life and learning and make a successful transition to school.
2. Every student is known, valued and cared for in our schools.
3. Every student, every teacher, every leader and every school improves every year.
4. Every student is engaged and challenged to continue to learn.
5. All young people have a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy; deep content knowledge; and confidence in their ability to learn, adapt and be responsible citizens.
6. All young people finish school well prepared for higher education, training and work.
7. Education is a great place to work and our workforce is of the highest calibre.
8. Our school infrastructure meets the needs of a growing population and enables future-focused learning and teaching.
9. Community confidence in public education is high.
10. Our education system reduces the impact of disadvantage.

- A review of contemporary evidence regarding the most effective education supports for students with disability
- Article 24.1 of the UNCRPD (2008)
- ***"Every student is known, valued and cared for in our schools"***
- ***Personalised learning*** and targeted support in the educational context

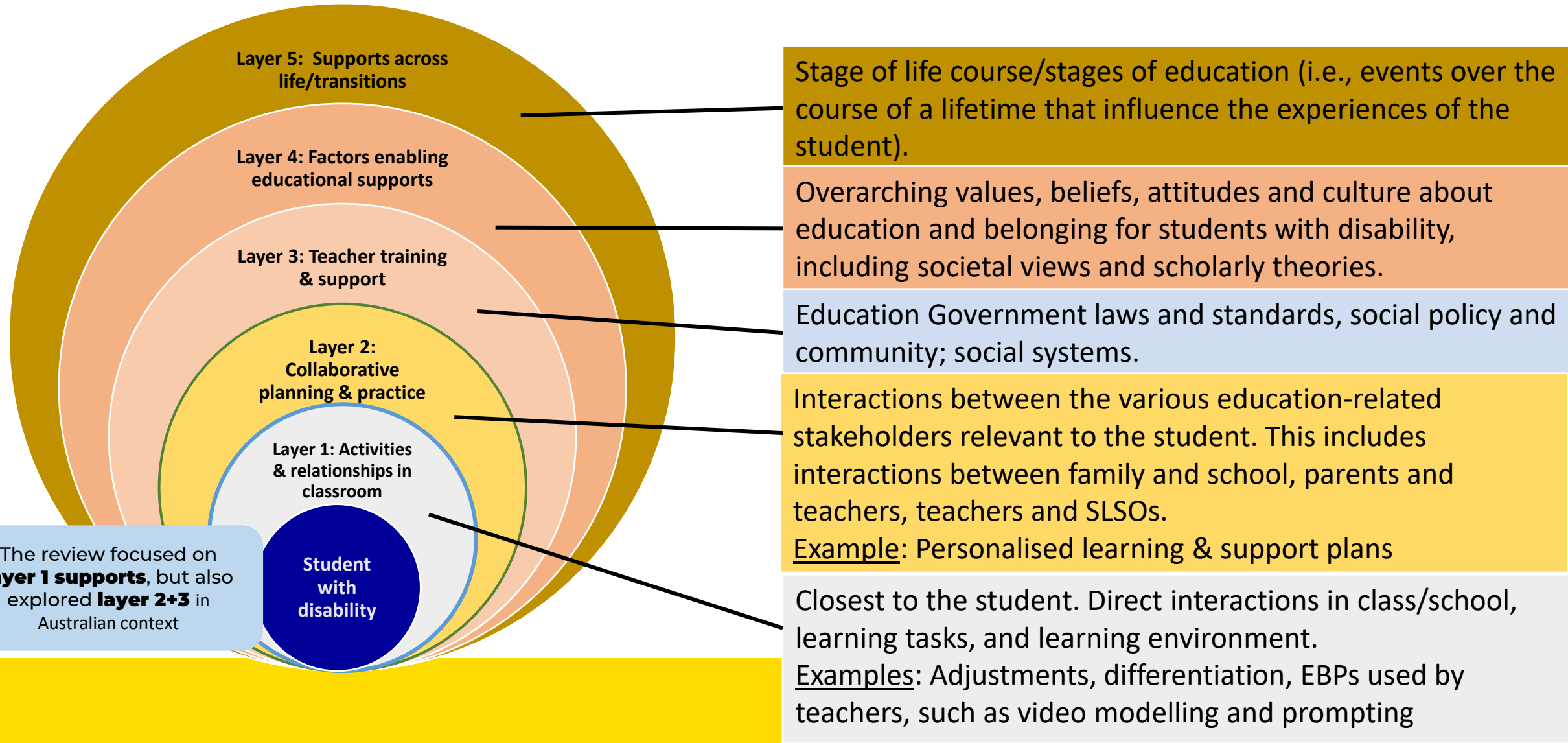
# Scope and Nature of Evidence

- Vast literature on supports for students with disability
- Time and project resources impact on scope
- Hierarchy of evidence
- Conceptual framing of the evidence base



# Framework of Educational Supports Used to Categorise EBPs

- Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (1994)



# Evidence-Based Practices



- instructional approaches
- proven by **high-quality and rigorous research**
- to achieve outcomes for students with disability across diverse areas (e.g., academic, social and emotional, and self-determination outcomes)

Established guidelines for systematic identification of these practices

- to distinguish them from “best-practices” or “research-based practices”
- Council for Exceptional Children (2014)
- What Works Clearinghouse (2017)

# Social Validity



- measures the overall acceptability of intervention beyond treatment effectiveness
- asking opinions about the practice of the people who are implementing, receiving and consenting to it



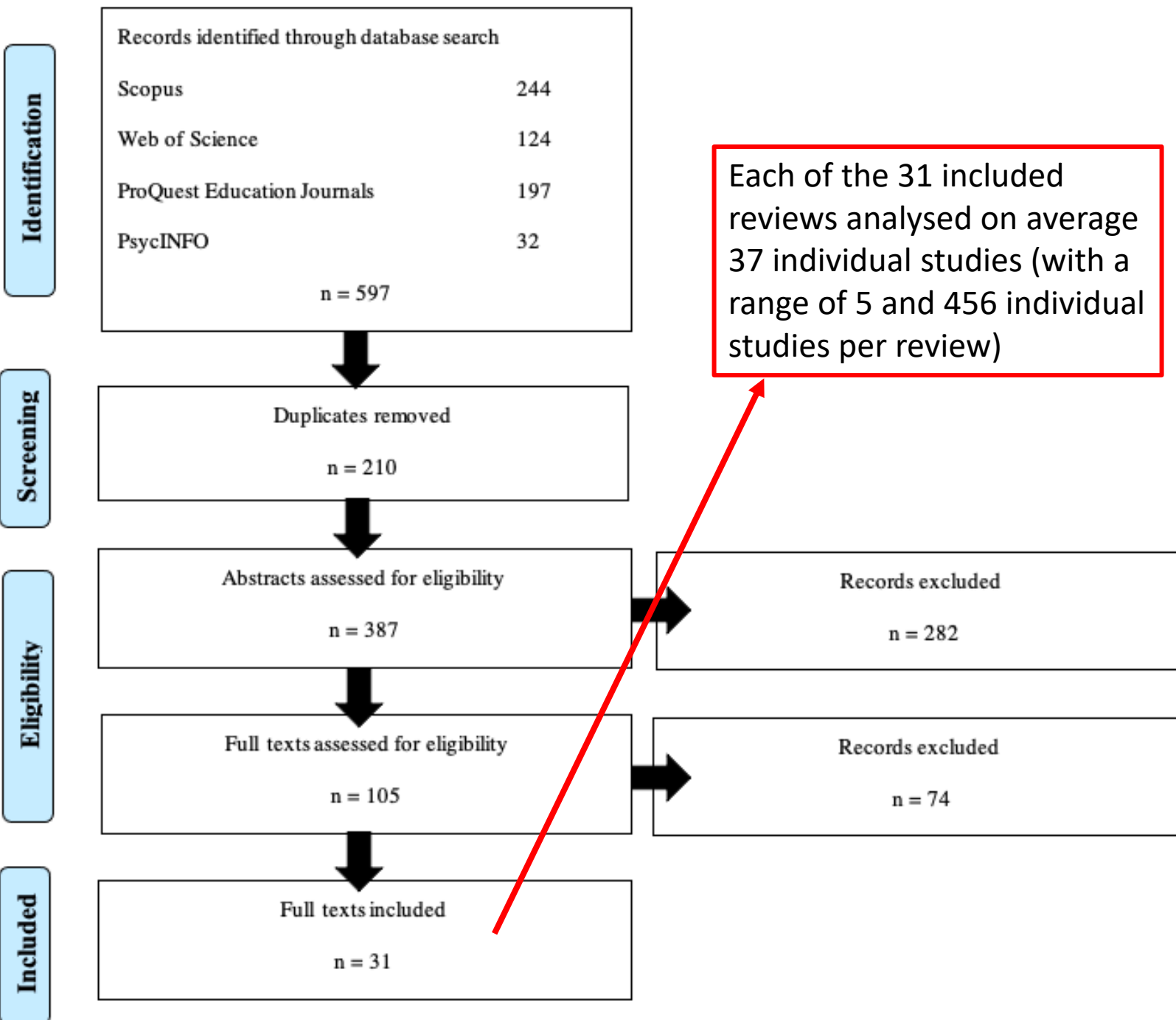
# Method



Umbrella Review of Internationally  
Recognised Evidence-Based  
Practices

Systematic and Supplementary  
Review and Synthesis of Evidence-  
Based Practices Used in Australia

Document Analysis of Key NSW  
Policy and Practice Guidance



# Review of International Literature

## Layer 1

**44 EBPs** international literature.

**16** of these EBPs were able to be grouped into the following **six categories**:

Visual & video  
supports

Peer  
mediated  
instruction

Systematic  
instruction

Self-  
management

Prompting

Time delay

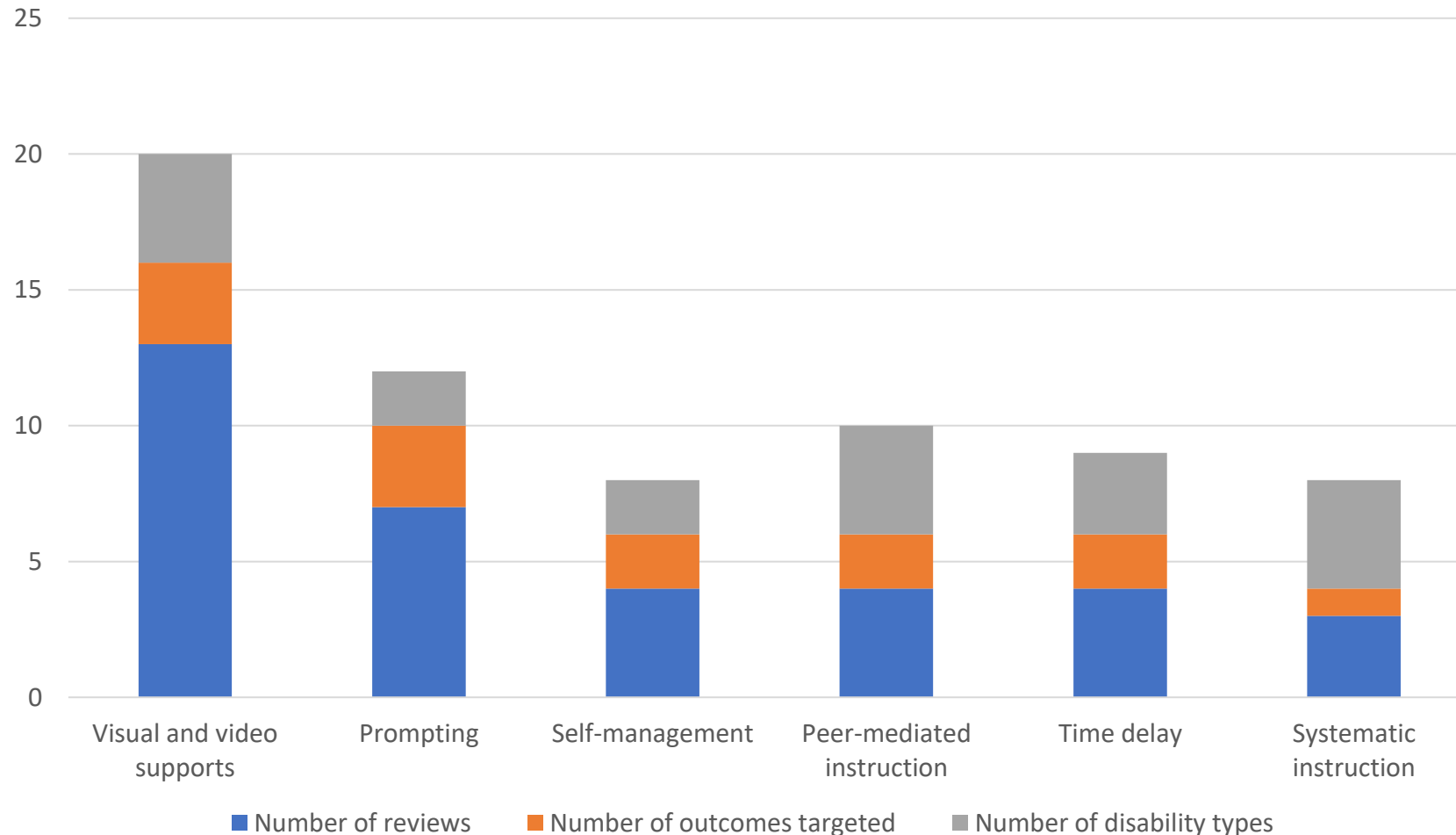


# Grouping EBPs Based on the UNSW Review

Grouping EBPs across strength of evidence, outcomes and disability types

Six groups of “**most studied**” EBPs that cover **most outcomes and disability types** identified by UNSW.

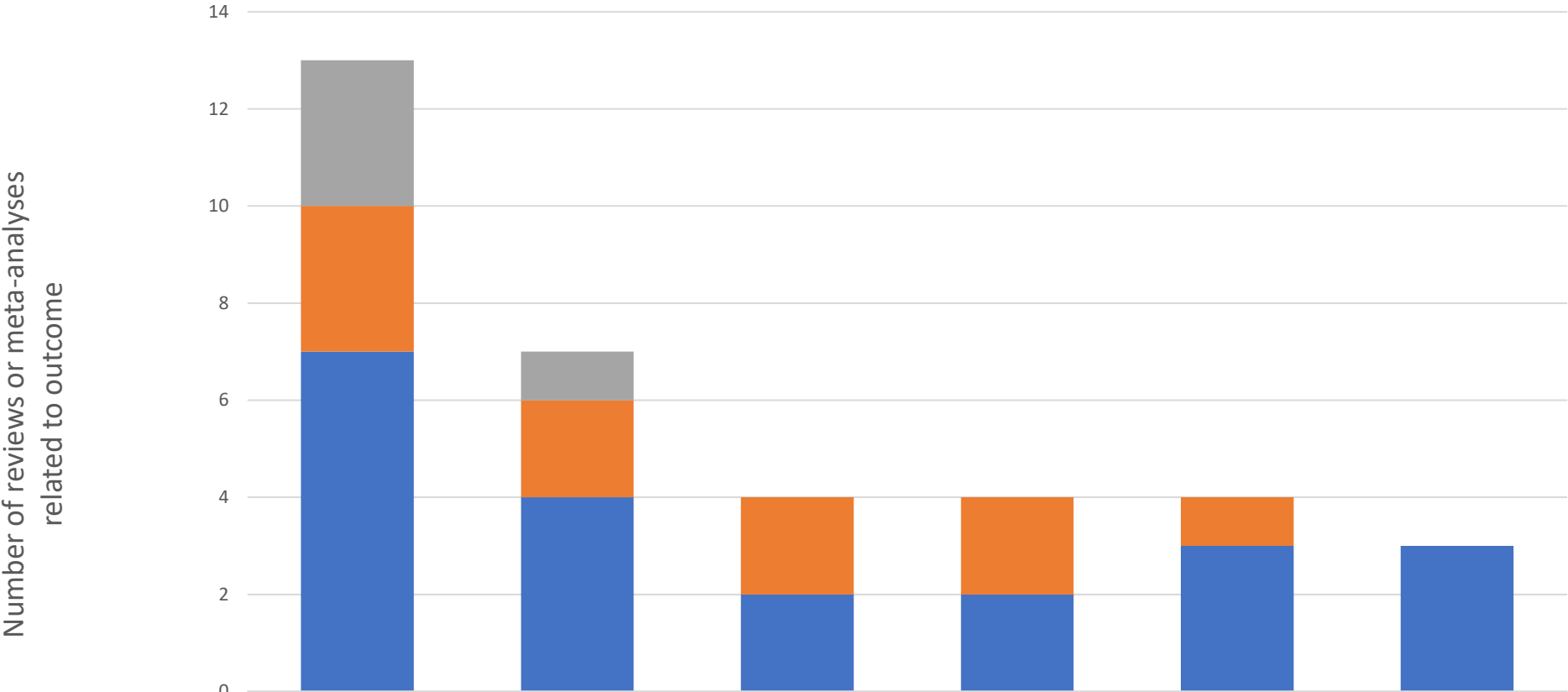
Further 28 EBPs that could not be grouped and are standalone practices



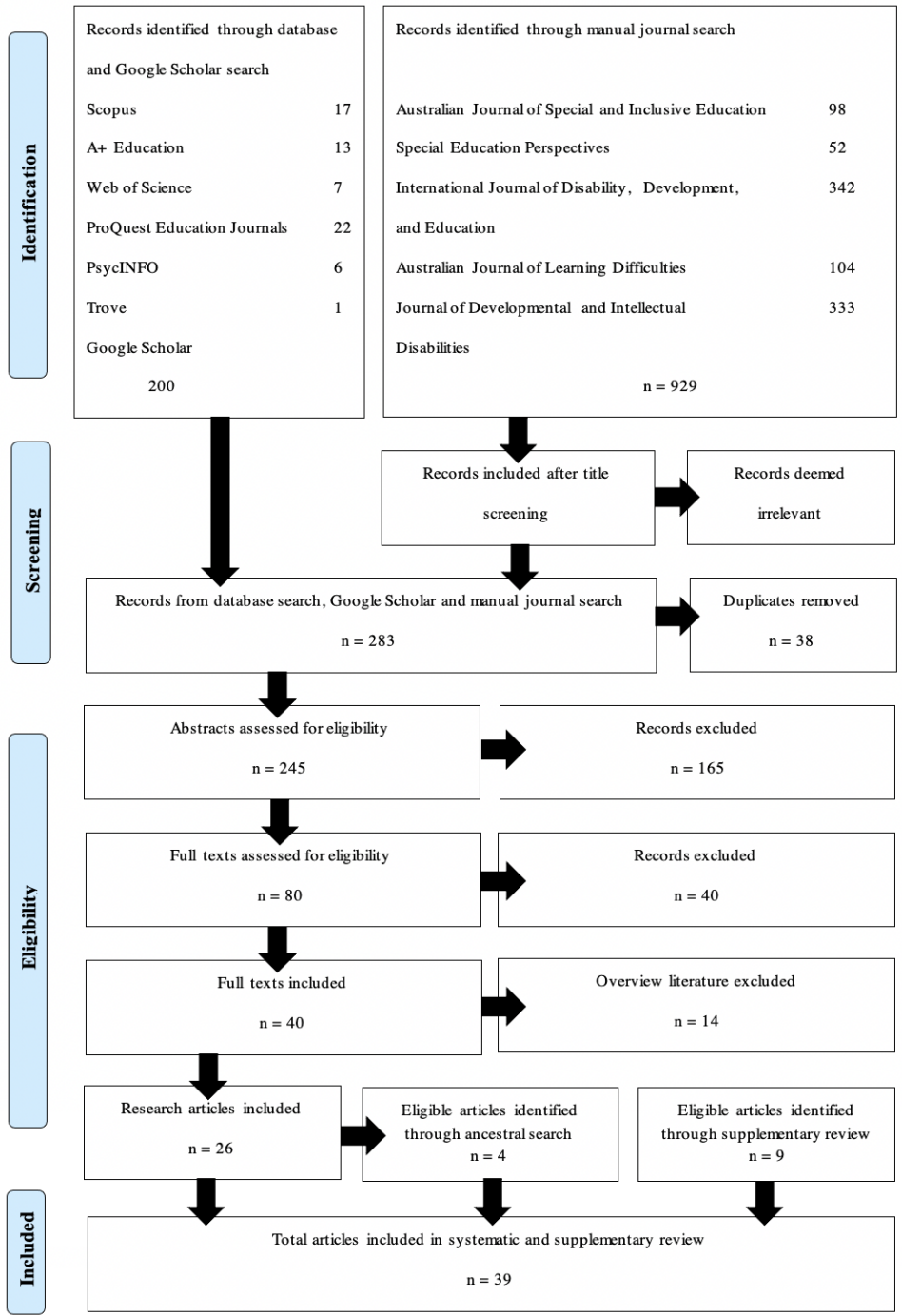
Most targeted cohorts:  
**intellectual disability**  
and/or  
**Autism**

But, also includes:  
**EBD/ADHD**  
**Developmental**  
**Multiple disabilities**

Grouped evidence-based practices across outcomes



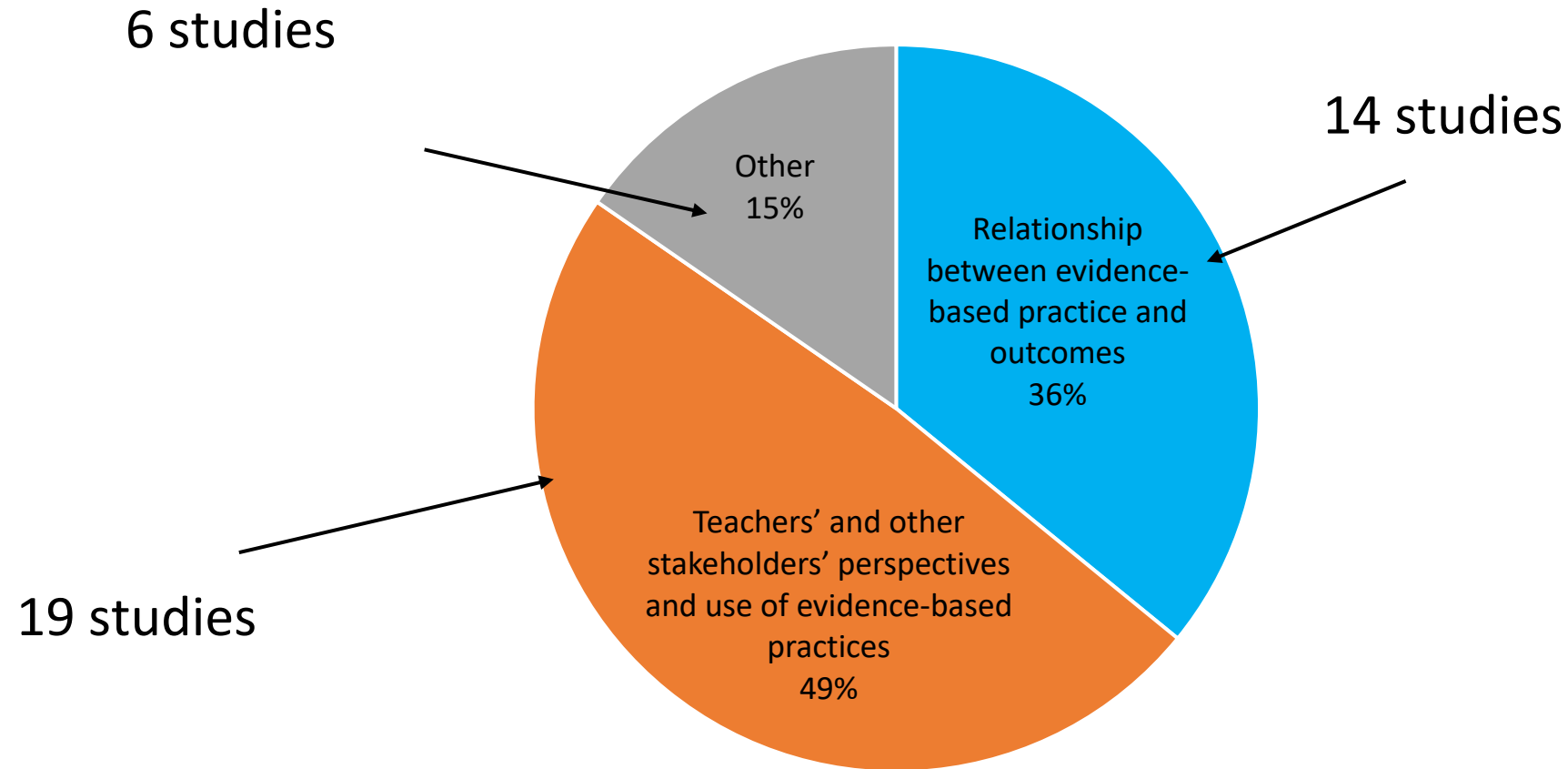
■ Self-determination and independence outcomes	3	1				
■ Social and emotional outcomes	3	2	2	2	1	
■ Academic outcomes	7	4	2	2	3	3





# 39 Australian Research Studies

Main focus of Australian research literature



# Evidence-Based Practices Found in Layer 1

- Found in both the international and Australian reviews

## Layer 1

**44 EBPs** international literature.  
**16** of these EBPs were able to be grouped  
into the following **six categories**:

Visual &  
video  
supports

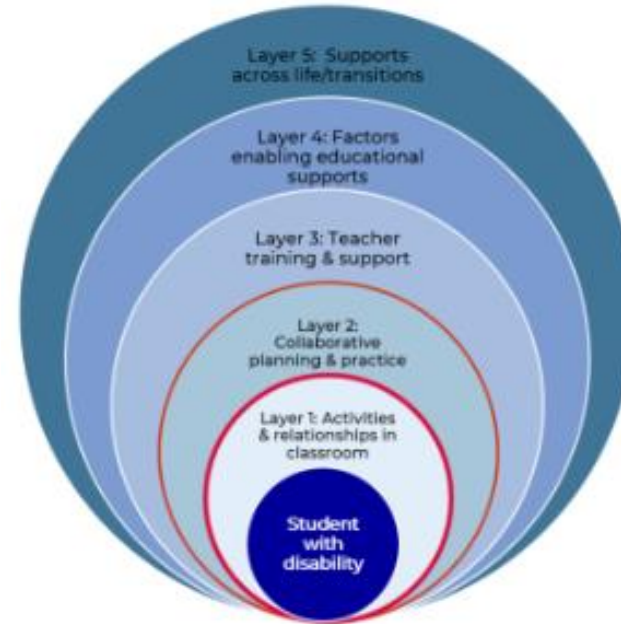
Peer  
mediated  
instruction

Systematic  
instruction

Self-  
management

Prompting

Time delay



The **remaining 28 EBPs** could not be grouped easily, but target social skills, communication, behaviour, or specific subject areas such as reading, maths.

## EBPs in Australian context



**21 of 44 EBPs** were found in the **Australian literature**.

**-Prompting**  
**-Self-management**  
**-Time delay**  
were absent or underrepresented.

This does not necessarily mean that they are not being used in Australia.

It just means they have not been subject to systematic research.

# Other Findings



- **Settings**

- **Focus:** students on the autism spectrum

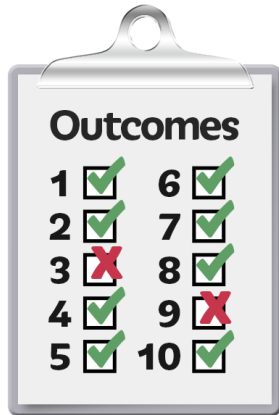
Underrepresented populations were students with:

- Intellectual disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Sensory disabilities
- Communication disorders
- Emotional and behavioural disorders
- Twice exceptional students



# Documentary Analysis of the Key Relevant NSW and Australian Legislative, Policy, Strategy and Practice Guidance

## Outcomes



- A strong focus on:
  - academic
  - social and emotional outcomes
- A lesser focus on self-determination and independence outcomes

# Documentary Analysis of the Key Relevant NSW and Australian Legislative, Policy, Strategy and Practice Guidance



## Evidence-based practices

- A lack of clear definition of what constitutes evidence-based practices
- The terms evidence-based practices, research-based practices and best practices used interchangeably

# Key Findings Overall



- A range of evidence-based practices are proven to achieve outcomes for students with disabilities
- Limited use of evidence-based practices to support Australian students with disability
- Selective use of evidence-based practices with Australian students with disability



# Key Findings



- Limited focus on supports for the full range of students with disability
- Low emphasis on the social validity of educational supports and student voice for students with disability in Australia
- Inconsistent identification and labelling of student outcomes
- Incomplete guidance on evidence-based practices

# Limited Use of Evidence-Based Practices to Support Australian Students with Disability



- The research literature related to the use of evidence-based practices in Australia is limited

## **A significant deficit in information about**

- The use of evidence-based practices in education for students with disability in Australia
- The utility and outcomes achieved for specific practices suited to students with diverse types and severity of disability

# Selective Use of Evidence-Based Practices with Australian Students with Disability



- Prompting and self-management practices underrepresented in the Australian literature
- No studies of time delay
- Just over half ( $n=23$ ) of the 44 evidence-based practices identified in the international literature were not present in the Australian research studies

# Limited Focus on Supports for the Full Range of Students with Disability

## The international literature:

- Students on the autism spectrum and students with intellectual disability
- Very seldom any differentiation of severity level or level of support need



## The Australian research:

- Students on the autism spectrum
- Only few studies examine evidence-based practices effective for students with more severe intellectual disability and multiple disabilities

# Low Emphasis on the Social Validity of Educational Supports and Student Voice for Students with Disability in Australia



- A lack of focus on measuring the social validity of evidence-based practices used with students with disability in Australia
- **A quarter of Australian research** explored the overall acceptability of a practice by stakeholder involved in it
- **Less than a quarter** gave voice to students with disability about their experience with evidence-based practices

# Inconsistent identification and labelling of student outcomes



## Student outcomes:

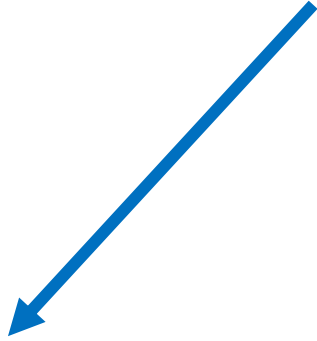
- the language used to label or categorise student outcomes associated with evidence-based practices is not standardised

## This review has utilised:

- Academic (22 studies)
- Social and emotional (8 studies)
- Self-determination and independence (4 studies)
- Other



# To Access the Literature Review



Scan me!



Supporting students with disability

What we learned from our research

Easy Read report



# And... Great Things Are Happening at the NSW Department of Education!

[Early childhood education](#) ▾[Public schools](#) ▾[Teaching and learning](#) ▾[Student wellbeing](#) ▾[Skills NSW](#)[Parents and carers](#) ▾[Policy library](#)[Teach NSW](#) ▾[Home](#) > [Inclusive Practice hub](#) > [School stories](#)

## School stories

School stories have been designed to help students learn about school and learn positive ways to respond to new situations.



### School holidays

School holidays can disrupt routines, resulting in stress or anxiety. Help students learn about school holidays and what to expect.



### Getting ready for school in the morning

Help students learn about school preparation.



### Being different

Help students reflect on the characteristics and strengthen importance of diversity.



### What will change at secondary school



### When a specialist visits

Help students learn about what they can



### When my teacher is away

Help students learn about what to do

## Being different

This story has been designed to help students learn about school so they know what to expect and can learn positive ways to respond to new situations. As a teacher, School Learning Support Officer (SLSO), Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) or Aboriginal SLSO (ASLSO) you can help a student by reading through the story. You could point out how the student's school experience is different and similar to that in the story and come up with other positive ways to respond.

This story is also available as an audio story for students. This may be particularly helpful for students who are [blind](#) or [have low vision](#).

Some students may find it easier to relate to a story when it contains pictures from their own environment. This may include some students on the [autism spectrum](#) or students with [intellectual disability](#). The 'add your own images' version of the story allows you to add photos from school (for example, the student's teacher, specialist, or classroom) before printing.

[Download being different \(PDF 2.8MB\)](#)[Download being different - add your own images \(PPT 197.3KB\)](#)

Listen to the audio story below



Scan me!



# Graduated Guidance

Least to Most Prompting



Verbal Prompts



Gestures



Modelling



Full/Partial Physical Prompts\*

## Teacher provides verbal instructions

These may also be graduated. (e.g. Which letter comes next? Write the letter that comes next. The next letter is "A" Write the letter "A")

## Teacher provides visual prompts

(e.g. picture cards, gestures, holding task-related object to student)

## Teacher demonstrates skill

(e.g. teacher models initial/partial step in the task; teacher models full task as they give instructions)

## Teacher provides physical guidance

(e.g. teacher touches student's elbow and repeats instructions; teacher takes student hand to initiate correct response)

Most to Least Prompting

## Most-to-least prompting

**What?** Fades from most intensive/invasive supports to least

**When?** New learning or a student has not acquired the necessary skills to complete a task independently.

## Least-to-most prompting

**What?** Fades from least intensive/invasive supports to most

**When?** Student has necessary knowledge/skills but responds incorrectly or does not respond to the task.

\*Note: some students may be distressed or uncomfortable with physical touch. Always talk to the student and their family about what kinds of prompts/communication they feel are most suited to their individual needs. The use of full or partial physical prompts should be included as part of a student's Personalised Learning and Support Plan and in line with the six decision-making principles for the use of restrictive practices.



# Prompting

## Graduated guidance

Graduated prompting is a scaffolded approach to increasing student independence in learning tasks. It may be particularly helpful for some students on the autism spectrum, or some students who have physical disability or an intellectual disability.

When a student is learning something new, most-to-least prompting may be most helpful. In most-to-least prompting, teachers or School Learning Support Officers provide lots of prompts and support (for example, physical prompts), and these are faded as the student becomes more proficient or confident with the task.

Least-to-most prompts tends to be used when a student is relatively proficient in a task, but is responding incorrectly or not engaging in a task. This approach involves providing the least amount of support needed to support the student with engaging in the task correctly.

The use of full or partial physical prompts should be included as part of a student's Personalised Learning and Support Plan and in line with the six decision-making principles for the use of restrictive practices.

This visual provides a brief overview of graduated prompting, and can be printed for display in a staff room or office.

[Download graduated guidance poster \(PDF 377KB\)](#)





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