

# Library Services to Students **With** Disabilities

Hamilton Secondary College

Hamilton Secondary College is a complex educational institution located about 14 kms south west of the Adelaide GPO. The College consists of four campuses, respectively serving adult students, senior secondary students, a middle school and the Hamilton Disability Unit.

The Hamilton Disability Unit is for students with severe and multiple disabilities. In 2007 it is anticipated that there will be 37 students in the Hamilton Unit. These students have a negotiated curriculum which includes functional literacy and numeracy, four modified SACE subjects and a range of life skills. Students in the Centre also access mainstream facilities and resources as part of their educational program.

As well as the 570 FTE adults (1200–1500 individuals) enrolled at Hamilton, the student client base also includes students from non-English speaking backgrounds, a District Special Class for students with special learning needs and a growing international student cohort with visits by Korean, Japanese, French and German students varying in length of stay from 2 weeks to 12 months.

The library charter is to support this complex student client base with a supportive learning environment with access to resources and technology to promote and encourage students in acquiring the information literacy skills for lifelong learning.

The Hamilton Unit was formerly a separate school. The Minda Special School was relocated to the Hamilton Secondary College site in 1998, becoming part of a multi-layered educational institution. Many of the staff, including library staff, had little experience in dealing with students with severe and multiple disabilities. Staff visited Minda School before the relocation to gain some understanding of these students and their learning needs.

After a very short period of time, we soon came to realise what a delightful group of young people these students were and still are. While it was difficult to provide them with structured lessons in the library, many soon found their way around and discovered their favourite sections in the Library. Over time one of the students became our 'newspaper monitor' – it was his job to put the paper out each day, and heaven help library staff if we did it. Another student, an AFL devotee, visited the library every day to check out each AFL club's websites and I think he put himself on every club's mailing list! He also studied the newspaper (football section only) to engage staff in animated conversation about the Adelaide Crows. Other students from the Centre would sit amid bookshelves and browse their favourite subjects, everything from pet mice and rabbits to cars and trucks!

All students in the Hamilton Disability Unit have access to the library. They range from those with limited reading and writing abilities and moderate to severe disabilities. They delight in borrowing from our extensive picture book collection, but also on subjects of their interests and hobbies, especially animals and pet care. Our library has a comfortable reading area and students from the Hamilton Unit often sit in this area with their teacher and support staff and either read or have stories read to them.

YES, there is another option



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