

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Planning innovative learning environments \(ILEs\)](#)

Understand: [Understanding pedagogy as integral to innovative learning environments](#)

Date

08 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/planning-innovative-learning-environments-iles/understanding-innovative-learning-environments

Understanding pedagogy as integral to innovative learning environments

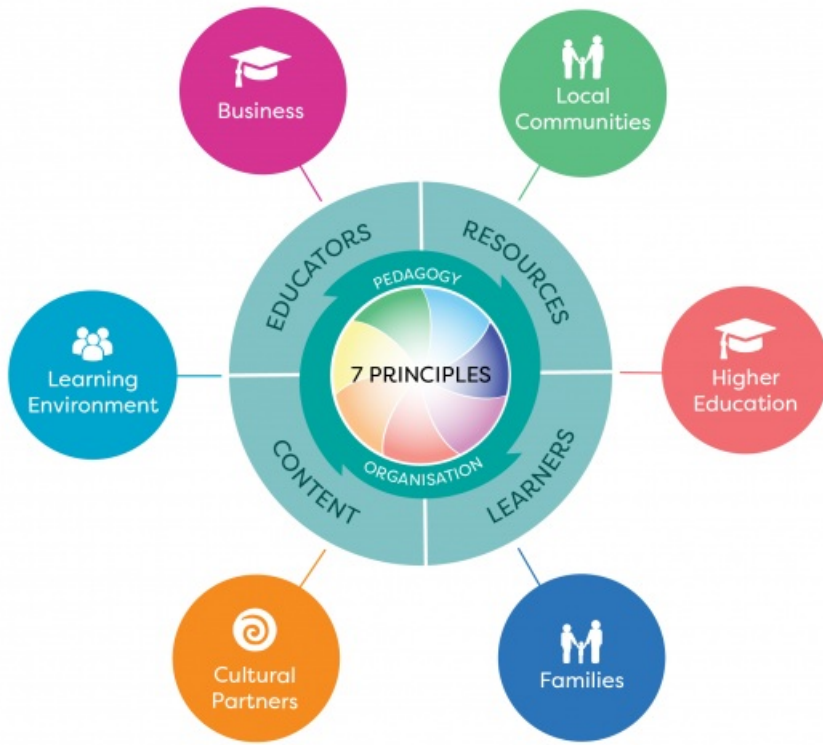
The curriculum places learners at the centre of teaching and learning. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are a foundation for developing an ILE that meets the needs of all learners.

Definition of an ILE

An ILE is an ecosystem that includes learners, educators, families/whānau, communities, content and resources. It is a holistic concept. It is future focused – capable of adapting as educational practices evolve and change.

In mid-2015, the Ministry of Education adopted the OECD's terms:

- **Innovative Learning Environments (ILE)** to refer the learning ecosystem – people (social), practice (pedagogical), and physical/property (QLE)
 - **Quality Learning Environments (QLE)** to refer to the physical part of a learning environment.
-



An ILE is an ecosystem that includes the activity and outcomes of learning. It includes the physical, social, and pedagogical context in which learning occurs.

- Seven principles – All of the [seven principles of learning](#) should underpin the design of ILEs, including planning, relationships, and activities.
- Pedagogy and organisation – Learners, educators, content, and resources form the pedagogical core of an ILE.
- Partners – Planning in collaboration with teachers, students, and your school community is fundamental to developing your ILE.

Source:

Adapted from OECD by Ministry of Education

https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/innovative-learning-environments_9789264203488-en#page151

[View full image \(237 KB\)](#)

ILE pedagogy

An ILE includes the physical, social, and pedagogical context in which learning occurs. As you plan to include **all** learners from the outset, consider the following.

1. Universal design for learning (UDL)

UDL is a research-based framework that informs planning and delivery of the curriculum with the needs of all learners in mind from the outset. Identify potential barriers to learning. Plan teaching approaches and a classroom/school design that is inclusive of all, creating a learner-centred environment. Use the [Universal Design for Learning guide](#) for further support.

2. Equity and diversity

Diversity encompasses everyone's variations and differences, including: culture, background, learning needs and preferences.

Equity has two related dimensions:

- Fairness – ensuring personal and social circumstance (such as gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity) are not an obstacle to achieving educational potential.
- Inclusion – students' identities, languages, abilities, needs, and talents are recognised and affirmed, and their learning needs are addressed to ensure an agreed standard of education for all.

3. Seven principles of learning

To be effective for 21st century learning, all the seven principles of learning, summarised in the diagram below, are present.

Identify:

- how the principles will be enacted in your ILE
 - what professional development is needed
 - how you can design a space to support them.
-

Seven principles of learning



All 7 principles should be present for an ILE to be effective.

Identify how they will be enacted in your ILE, how this informs your design of the space, and what PLD is needed.

Source:

Adapted from OECD by Ministry of Education

https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/innovative-learning-environments_9789264203488-en#page157

[View full image \(248 KB\)](#)

Student-centred design

Use UDL principles to inform an inclusive design. Plan an environment that recognises students as the core participants and supports:

- learner agency – support students to understand their needs as learners, encourage active engagement and ownership of learning
- personalised learning – recognise and plan for students to learn in different ways, be sensitive to individual differences and prior knowledge
- inclusion – consider the infrastructure, technologies, and teaching approaches that enable all students to participate and achieve in an environment that meets their needs
- the social nature of learning.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/8lOKS8Mv-8M>

Three Christchurch schools share their learning space designs, which support educational practices that meet the needs of diverse learners.

No captions or transcript

Source:

[Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga \(NZ\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lOKS8Mv-8M)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lOKS8Mv-8M>

Quality infrastructure

Quality learning spaces refer to the infrastructure element of an ILE. Access and choice for all learners is an important consideration when planning inclusive spaces. A QLS should:

- enable collaborative approaches
- be easily configured and used in different ways to enable a range of teaching and learning approaches across the day
- have quality acoustics, lighting, technology, heating, and air quality to support learning.

Be clear on your purpose

Peel everything back to see the "why", so options for change become clear.

The "why" is important – there can be many versions of "what" you build.

There has to be a clear purpose for each learning space – a general purpose space ends up being everything and nothing.

Plan for deep understanding of the rationale behind your space – this takes time.

Waimairi School case study

Source:

[Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga](https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Primary-Secondary/Property/Design/Flexible-learning-spaces/Case-Study-Waimairi-School-WEB.pdf)
<https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Primary-Secondary/Property/Design/Flexible-learning-spaces/Case-Study-Waimairi-School-WEB.pdf>

Plan for diversity

Design flexibly. Spaces must be adaptable and future-proofed. Consider the types of spaces and design with specific learner's needs in mind. For example, how are students who are deaf or hard of hearing, have ASD, vision impairments, or physical disabilities included in spaces for:

- social and collaborative learning
- student-directed/teacher-directed learning
- independent work
- project work
- direct instruction?

Useful resources

Designing quality learning spaces

This section covers the Designing Quality Learning Spaces (DQLS) requirements when designing schools and kura.

[Visit website](#)

Property design standards and legal requirements

All school building projects must comply with legal and Ministry design standards, and should follow best practice standards for school building projects.

[Visit website](#)

This information was downloaded/printed from the Ministry of Education's website "Inclusive Education". Except where otherwise noted it is Crown Copyright 2018.

Information on the Inclusive Education website is regularly updated so we recommend you check the website version of this information to ensure it remains current.
