

SHARED THE FEELING?
Now let's share
the future!



SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week
November 10 - 14 2003

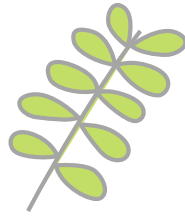


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THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tOIREAS COMHIONANNAIS





SHARED THE FEELING? NOW LET'S SHARE THE FUTURE!

How schools can make a difference in
European Year of People with Disabilities 2003

SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week
November 10 - 14 2003



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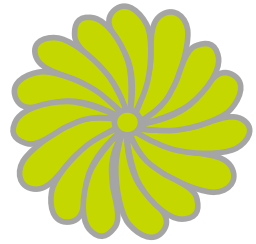
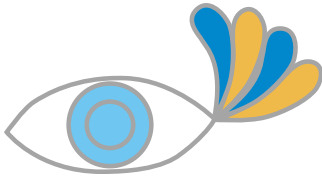
FOREWORD

Dear Principal

The designation of 2003 as the European Year of People with Disabilities provides us all with an opportunity to ask how we can make a difference. The main aim of the year is to raise awareness of the 37 million people with disabilities in Europe and the difficulties which they face daily, as well as the contribution they can make to our society.

This booklet is an important contribution to the work of European Year of People with Disabilities. Schools and educators have a key role in forming the opinions of our young people, which shape the future policies, and attitudes of our country. We all have an idea of the kind of country in which we want to live, where each of us is valued for our talents, our contributions and our abilities. This booklet will assist in exploring some of the issues which exist for pupils and others with disabilities, to enable greater understanding of their needs and promote integration.

The 2003 Special Olympics World Games was a never to be forgotten event in Irish history, where we were all encouraged to “share the feeling”. To ensure that the progress made through this and other initiatives is built on, we are now being encouraged to share the future. This booklet outlines ways to ensure a lasting legacy from the European Year of People with Disabilities. **Schools Make The Difference! Week** (10-14 November 2003) provides a focus for all schools to signal their commitment to **Make The Difference!** by engaging in activities and

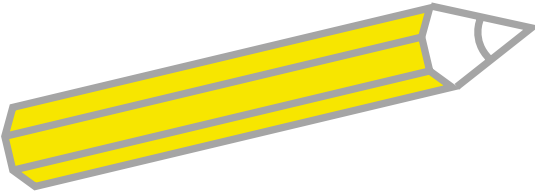


initiatives aimed at providing reasonable accommodation for and the inclusion of pupils with disabilities.

People with disabilities are often needlessly excluded, when barriers are either consciously or unconsciously put in their way. We must all open our minds to how barriers can exclude unnecessarily, and examine the barriers that exist, why they are there and how we can reduce or eliminate them. There is a challenge for everyone in the field of education to examine how a lack of accommodation of people's needs limits possibilities. In contrast, we need to consider how providing reasonable accommodation to people to take account of different needs opens up those possibilities - to everyone's benefit.

A National Campaign is asking people throughout Ireland to **Make The Difference!** by examining how people with disabilities can be better served and afforded greater opportunity. Business, the Arts, public and private organisations and individuals will all be asked to find ways they can ensure greater inclusion.

In this booklet you will find a wealth of resources that will assist your school to achieve targets for the inclusion of pupils with disabilities. Equality legislation exists to protect the rights of people with disabilities and other groups from discrimination. In schools, reasonable accommodation must be provided for pupils and staff with disabilities (including physical, sensory, learning and mental health difficulties).



There is information on:

- the organisations which have come together to promote the **Schools Make The Difference!** initiative (European Year of People with Disabilities, the Equality Authority, the National Disability Authority)
- what reasonable accommodation means
- what the law means for your school
- ideas for whole-school and student activities for **Schools Make The Difference! Week** (November 10th-14th 2003)
- resources that can help you to reach your goals

Further changes are under way in legislation which if enacted will move us further along the road to greater integration, and assist in ensuring all children are enabled to reach their full potential. Your school can contribute to a more inclusive Irish society through participation in this week, examining what the issues close to home are and ensuring that your school provides the maximum possibilities for people with disabilities to participate and achieve. Get on board the European Year of People with Disabilities and Make the Difference!

Noel Dempsey T.D.
Minister for Education

Angela Kerins
Chairperson, European Year of
People with Disabilities

CONTENTS

	page
FOREWORD	2
WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EUROPEAN YEAR OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 2003?	7
WHAT IS THE LEGAL POSITION WITH REGARD TO DISABILITY AND EDUCATION?	9
WHAT IS REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?	11
HOW CAN SCHOOLS SHARE THE FUTURE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?	13
WHAT SORT OF THINGS SHOULD HAPPEN IN SCHOOLS TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!	16
WHERE DOES THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY FIT IN?	20
WHERE DOES THE NDA FIT IN?	23
RESOURCES	25



WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EUROPEAN YEAR OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 2003?

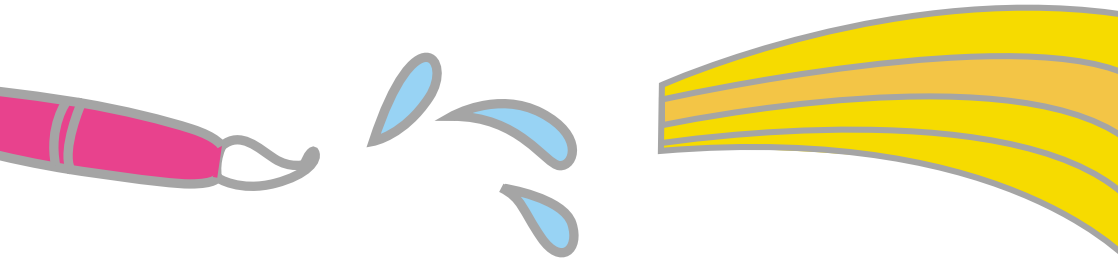
There are 37 million reasons why - 37 million people with disabilities in the European Union. That's one in ten of us. Closer to home, there are approximately 340,000 people with disabilities living in Ireland. Tens of thousands of them are school-age children who want to join in with their peers and have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential.

2003 is the European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD). The Year aims to create awareness of the rights of people with disabilities to equal opportunities and protection against discrimination - and to encourage everyone to do something about those rights.

A recent survey '*Public Attitudes to Disability in the Republic of Ireland*' shows that there is a serious lack of understanding of what disability means and how many people it affects. Disabled people are very much part of our society. They are workers, consumers, tax payers, politicians, students, neighbours and friends. But they are often not treated that way. Frequently excluded from the kind of educational and employment opportunities that non-disabled people take for granted, many people with disabilities live in poverty.

Disabled people want to be treated as equal citizens who have the power to speak for themselves, not as objects of pity or charity. EYPD provides an excellent opportunity to work to change the future for people with disabilities in Ireland.

The Year in Ireland is focussed on the concept of how we are all **ABLE**. Each and every person has differing abilities.



We are all in our own way **able** to imagine, to create, to live, laugh, participate, work and achieve. We are all **capable** of contributing to society. And it is education that gives us the right start on that journey.

We want Irish society to embrace European Year of People with Disabilities. We are running a nationwide media campaign - **MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**. We are asking everyone to make the difference - be aware of the issues, discriminations and barriers faced by people with disabilities every day and to take an active part in changing this. The success of this initiative depends on everyone playing their part.

Specifically, we hope that schools will **SHARE THE FUTURE** and **MAKE THE DIFFERENCE** in the lives of pupils with disabilities by participating in **SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week 10-14 November 2003**.

We are also calling all schools to make a pledge and highlight this on the poster provided and to let us know what they will do to Make the Difference in the lives of people with disabilities. For more information, please visit www.able.ie or www.equality.ie or www.education.ie or www.nda.ie

WHAT IS THE LEGAL POSITION WITH REGARD TO DISABILITY AND EDUCATION?



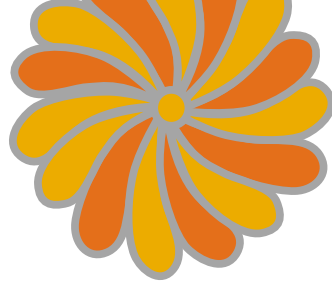
Even before the forthcoming legislation on the education of people with disabilities is enacted, schools have obligations in relation to students with disabilities under the Education Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000.

The Education Act requires a school to provide education to students that is appropriate to their abilities and needs. It specifies that a school must use its available resources to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or with other special educational needs, are identified and provided for [section 9].

This broad duty is developed in other sections of the Act through specific actions and requirements. The school's board of management is charged with managing the school "for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for *each* student at the school for which that board has responsibility" [section 15(1), emphasis added].

The board is also required to publish the policy of the school on both admission to and participation in it. The Act specifies that this must include the school's policy on the "admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs". The board must also ensure that the "principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected" [section 15(2)(d)].

In addition, the board is required to use the resources provided to the school from public funds "to make



reasonable provision and accommodation for students with a disability or other special educational needs, including, where necessary, alteration of buildings and provision of appropriate equipment" [section 15(2)(g)].

The school plan must also address the needs of students with disabilities. It must "state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school". In addition, it must specify "the measures which the school proposes to take to achieve those objectives, including equality of access to and participation in the school by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs" [section 21(2)].

The Equal Status Act also places duties on schools in respect of students with disabilities, including applicant students. Discrimination - direct, indirect or by association - is prohibited. Schools may not discriminate in the admission of students, in their access to any facility, in the terms or conditions of participation or in disciplinary sanctions that are imposed. Failing to reasonably accommodate a student with a disability also constitutes discrimination.

For further information on the Equal Status Act, see *Schools and the Equal Status Act*, published by the Equality Authority and the Department of Education and Science, 2003.

WHAT IS REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

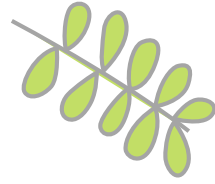
Reasonable accommodation is a term that everyone, including schools, is becoming increasingly familiar with. The concept is simple. **Reasonable accommodation means providing special treatment or facilities in order to enable people to access a service.** The significance for schools is that now students with disabilities have a legally enforceable right to reasonable accommodation where it would be impossible or unduly difficult for them to participate in school without such treatment or facilities. A limit is placed on the requirement to provide reasonable accommodation: an organisation is not required to incur anything more than a nominal cost in meeting the needs.

Reasonable accommodation is only one aspect of the Equal Status Act that affects schools. The Act outlaws discrimination on nine grounds:

- gender
- marital status
- family status
- disability
- age
- race
- sexual orientation
- religious belief
- membership of the Traveller community.

Addressing the particular circumstances of schools, the law names four specific areas of school life in which discrimination is prohibited:

- the admission of students
- the access of students to benefits after they are enrolled - including courses and facilities
- any other conditions on participation in any school activity
- sanctions on students (including expulsion).



It covers the formal rules and written policies of a school and also their practical implementation on a day-to-day basis.

Instead of developing separate policies, a more effective way for a school to build a broad equality culture and practice and to address the specific issue of reasonable accommodation is to use the policies and procedures that are required by the education legislation. The process of developing or reviewing a school plan, admission policy and code of behaviour provides opportunities to consider the needs of students across the nine grounds and to say how they will be met.

The starting point in meeting the needs of a student with a disability is the assessment of those needs. This begins with looking at the barriers the student faces. These might be found in the attitudes of other people, in processes of communication, in physical access or in the way the school is organised. For each student with a disability, a school will need to consult with the student's parents, relevant advocates or experts and, most importantly, the student themselves in order to understand what it needs to do to meet the young person's requirements in an optimal fashion.

For further information on reasonable accommodation, see *Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services*, published by the Equality Authority, 2002.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS SHARE THE FUTURE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

At whole-school level

Boards of management and school principals make a huge difference to the lives of their pupils, including young people with disabilities. The **SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week** provides an opportunity for schools to examine how they are doing this and to put in place ways of including everyone in all aspects of school life.

In general, although the right to schooling is generally accepted by everyone, it has not yet been translated into a right to full educational access to all aspects of the curriculum. How involved and facilitated are pupils with disabilities in science practicals, art and cookery classes, PE and sport and reading to the class, for example?

There are also important aspects to school outside the curriculum. How involved and facilitated are pupils with disabilities in extra-mural activities, field trips or exchanges?

Custom and practice leads much of Irish society to define people with disabilities by what they can't do, not by what they can. Real awareness of disability in schools involves relating to the whole child, not just (or primarily) in terms of the impairment they may have. How does this translate into admission policy, streaming and student supports? Is difference celebrated or marginalised in the school? How does this translate into support for students who are struggling with the system as it stands? How is this recognised and what happens if a pupil is seen to be becoming withdrawn or depressed or developing mental health difficulties?



To be meaningful, inclusion involves changes in organisational structures and teaching methodologies - **a whole-school approach**. This involves **awareness, thinking through and planning**.

A planned and systematic approach will **make the difference**. Reasonable accommodation of pupils with disabilities is the practical result of implementing real inclusion as the ethos of a school. A school that:

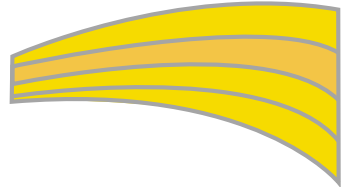
- demonstrates that it values diversity and the contributions of all pupils
- is flexible and responsive
- supports teachers to provide what pupils need

has fulfilled the preconditions for inclusion.

At pupil level

For many young people the Special Olympics World Games 2003 were a real opportunity to celebrate what the experience of disability has to offer Irish society. Inclusion, competition, belonging - all these were given new meanings in summer 2003, and people with disabilities were the ones leading the change.

SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week is a chance to reinforce this thinking and translate it into lasting benefit. Setting up class and extra-mural activities which stress the contribution and achievements of people with disabilities, and their ordinary presence in the community, will foster



understanding of the reality that disability is part of the regular continuum of everyday life. In that kind of atmosphere reasonable accommodation is nothing special: it's just an ordinary, integral aspect of daily activity. Some people do things differently - that's an enriching experience for everyone.

Making a start

To **SHARE THE FUTURE** consider these questions:

- What are the values that this school embodies in its work?
(Ensure that these are fully extended to pupils with disabilities in a practical way, and you are there!)
- What can this school do to make more students feel more included?
(Young people with disabilities name consultation as a major priority. "*Nothing about us without us*", as the independent living movement says.)
- What can be achieved within the current budget?
(That reasonable accommodation costs a lot of money is an inaccurate assumption. Much far-reaching reasonable accommodation in schools has no financial implications.)

WHAT SORT OF THINGS SHOULD HAPPEN IN SCHOOLS TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

Here are just a few ideas for beginning the process of providing reasonable accommodation in schools right now.

At whole-school level:


- Launch a one-page policy outlining the school's intentions with regard to the reasonable accommodation of students with disabilities
- Review current school policy and practice overall (or select some key areas) to see if they foster or inhibit inclusion
- Make a school plan for reasonable accommodation and inclusion
- Carry out an access audit of the school (involve disabled and non-disabled students in this) and make all changes immediately that have low (or no) cost implications
- Announce the introduction of at least one important (far-reaching) reasonable accommodation by the end of the EYPD - and at least one more by the end of the school year
- Consider how students with special educational needs in the school can be better valued in the context of the whole school
- Find out what supports or inputs teachers would most value with regard to including pupils with disabilities more fully
- Let teachers know where they can access support on these issues both within and outside the school



- Provide support and information to help teachers to recognise distress and mental health difficulties in their pupils
- Review anti-bullying and anti-harassment procedures and inputs to ensure that disability-related issues are addressed appropriately
- Make a plan for including disability-related topics into classes, ensuring that achievement takes its place beside problem-focussed issues
- Introduce action-oriented disability awareness/equality training for staff and pupils
- Source images and texts that are inclusive of the diversity of the population
- Review library stock to ensure that it reflects the diversity of pupils in the school
- Hold a public exhibition of disability-related images and materials produced in the school and invite the community to comment.

At teacher and pupil level:

- Ask pupils with disabilities in the school to name their priorities for reasonable accommodation – and ensure that their views are taken into account as the school develops its policy and practice
- Set up a suggestions box to canvas students' ideas for improvements that would enhance inclusion
- Link up with special schools and/or organisations of people with disabilities in the community in such a way that pupils are sharing valued activities rather than



providing charity or kindness (meeting up with people with disabilities who share their interests, learning things from disabled people, "leisure buddying" are some possible ways of doing this)

- Set up a system of in-school mentoring so that new students with disabilities have support in accessing school routine and arrangements
- Involve a student rep in representing the interests of disabled pupils on the school council
- Organise events aimed at showing students how to look after their mental health
- Dedicate an issue of the school magazine to disability-related topics
- Meet organisations of deaf young people to find out about deaf culture
- In class, ensure that the students can see and hear the teacher and also see and hear each other
- Rearrange furniture so that everyone, including wheelchair-using students, can move easily around every classroom
- Canvass views of disabled and non-disabled pupils on disability-related topics and provide a forum for sharing these
- Create some disability-related class activities - surveys, mediawatch, quizzes, stories, projects, drama...
- Run a competition on a disability-related theme
- Organise an event which expresses support for the aspirations of young people with disabilities
- Invite local disabled people's organisations to talk to students about topics of mutual interest.



Whatever you do...

Let the pupils, parents and wider community know what you are doing. Building ownership is a great way of ensuring that initiatives become really embedded in the school and also make a real contribution to the community in which the school is located. That way we can be sure that everyone gets to **SHARE THE FUTURE!**

The European Year of People with Disabilities is also keen to know what schools are doing in **SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week**. Please register your school activities and pledges at *webmaster@nda.ie*.

Don't forget you can also make plans to hold your own make the difference week, next year, making it part of your annual school programme.

DISABILITIES

there is a four letter word in all of us



THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF
PEOPLE WITH **DISABILITIES**



find out more at able.ie

WHERE DOES THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY FIT IN?

The Equality Authority is an independent statutory body, charged under the equality legislation, which includes both the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Employment Equality Act 1998 with working for the elimination of discrimination and for the promotion of equality of opportunity. (The Equality Authority is sometimes confused with the Equality Tribunal. However, the Equality Tribunal is a completely separate body that hears and decides on cases brought under the equality legislation).

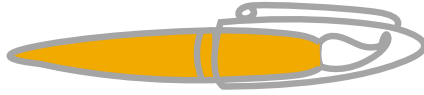
The Equality Authority has a particular brief under the Equal Status Act with regard to schools. Recently casework in relation to schools has increased. For this reason, as part of its focus on areas of service provision that make a significant difference to people's quality of life, the Equality Authority's current strategic plan contains commitments on several education-related issues:

- developing information materials and initiatives for schools in relation to the legislation and good equality practice
- providing practical supports for schools in devising and implementing equality initiatives and good equality practices
- carrying out research to build the knowledge base in relation to the interplay between education provision, equality and the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation
- developing more casework in the area of school provision.

The Equality Authority's main focus in the area of education is school practice. The ambition is to support a school practice that is non-discriminatory, that accommodates diversity and that has a capacity to achieve equality outcomes. This target rests easily on what has already been achieved by so many schools.

How students experience their school life and what happens in schools flows from the foundations of school plans, admission policies and codes of behaviour. It is vital that these important documents incorporate an effective and adequate equality dimension. It is in these areas that the Equality Authority is working to develop practical supports for schools.





Current work by the Equality Authority in this area includes:

Research into current practice on including an equality dimension in the preparation of school plans

Research into the current experience and situation of pupils with disabilities in primary and post-primary education

Publishing and disseminating "*Schools and the Equal Status Act*" jointly with the Department of Education and Science

Publishing "*Education and Equality*", the proceedings of a joint conference with ASTI

Developing a joint conference with INTO on the inclusive school.

For further information about the work of the Equality Authority contact:

Equality Authority

2 Clonmel Street

Dublin 2

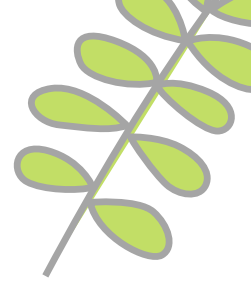
Public Information Centre

Lo Call: 1890 245545

Tel: 01 417 3333

www.equality.ie

WHERE DOES THE NDA FIT IN?



The National Disability Authority (NDA) was established in 2000. Its function is to advise and inform the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform about developments in policy and practice that affect people with disabilities. In simple terms the NDA has a role to inform the Minister about how things are now for disabled people and to advise him/her on how they could or should be in the future. The NDA is working to make a difference for people with disabilities.

Education is one of the priority areas of the NDA. The NDA aims to ensure that children with disabilities have the same educational opportunities as non-disabled children. For example, its recent publication, *Encouraging Voices* (NDA, 2003), explores the perspectives of marginalised young people in relation to their schooling and makes the case for ensuring that their voices are heard and heeded by professionals and policy-makers.

As part of a survey published by the NDA in 2002, *Public Attitudes to Disability in the Republic of Ireland*, respondents were asked their opinions about the education of children with disabilities. Nearly half of the people surveyed thought that children with disabilities should attend the same school as non-disabled children, believing that this would give students with disabilities access to equal opportunities. They also thought that it would enhance equality by giving all pupils the experience of diversity in the classroom. Those who disagreed believed that the special needs of children with disabilities would not be met in mainstream schools. They thought that the



educational progress of disabled children would be hindered and had concerns about safety. The **SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week** can do a great deal to show people that schools are aware of the implications of inclusion, and are actively engaged in ensuring that education in Ireland benefits everyone equally.

The National Disability Authority would like everyone to understand that disability is a normal part of being human. Everyone experiences disability at some time in their lives. Some people have life-long disabilities, others experience impairment for a shorter period. For all of us what we term "disability" is an aspect of being normal, being human, being alive. If we all remember this we can all make a difference.

For further information about the work of the NDA contact:

NDA
25 Clyde Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4
Tel: (01) 608 0400
E-mail: nda@nda.ie
Web: www.nda.ie

RESOURCES

The partners in the SHARE THE FUTURE! initiative can provide schools with further information and assistance:

- **Department of Education & Science**
Special Education Section
Cornamaddy
Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 0902 74621
www.education.ie
- **Equality Authority**
2 Clonmel Street
Dublin 2
Public Information Centre Lo Call: 1890 245 545
Tel: 01 417 3333
www.equality.ie
- **European Year of People With Disabilities**
Winnie Brennan
European Year of People with Disabilities
National Disability Authority
25 Clyde Road
Dublin 4
www.able.ie or www.eypd2003.ie
- **National Disability Authority**
25 Clyde Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4
Tel: (01) 608 0400
E-mail: nda@nda.ie
Web: www.nda.ie

For a listing of disability organisations in Ireland, visit the EYPD website www.able.ie

Books, videos and other resources

A wide range of books and video resources on disability issues is available free of charge in the National Disability Authority Library, 25 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. The catalogue is available online at www.nda.ie/library

Some of the many publications produced by the partner organisations include:

Building for Everyone: Inclusion, Access and Use

National Disability Authority (2002)

Video also available

Encouraging Voices

National Disability Authority (2003)

Public Attitudes to Disability in the Republic of Ireland is available on at www.nda.ie

Schools and the Equal Status Act

Equality Authority and the Department of Education and Science (2003)

Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services

Equality Authority (2002)

Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Difficulties, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

School Enrichment Programme

2003 Special World Summer Games

Many useful resources can be accessed at *www.scoilnet.ie*

Information regarding **SCHOOLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Week** is available from *www.able.ie*, *www.nda.ie*, *www.equality.ie* and *www.education.ie*

- **Department of Education & Science**
Special Education Section
Cornamaddy
Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 0902 74621
www.education.ie
 - **Equality Authority**
2 Clonmel Street
Dublin 2
Public Information Centre Lo Call: 1890 245 545
Tel: 01 417 3333
www.equality.ie
 - **European Year of People With Disabilities**
Winnie Brennan
European Year of People with Disabilities
National Disability Authority
25 Clyde Road
Dublin 4
www.able.ie or www.eypd2003.ie
 - **National Disability Authority**
25 Clyde Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4
Tel: (01) 608 0400
E-mail: nda@nda.ie
Web: www.nda.ie
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