

HOLROYD/MERRYLANDS



John (left), 13, and Andrew, 14, with some stools that they helped make and decorate.

Project brings teens together

Special-education students gain time to be social

Maryanne Taouk

STUDENTS from Holroyd School are looking beyond the classroom for their latest charity project.

The special-education school has teamed up with Year 11 and 12 students from Key College in Merrylands to build and paint stools as part of the sustainability-focused SEATS program.

Holroyd schoolteacher Aydan Durmaz said the program, which uses products produced in a supported factory in Vietnam, has allowed students to see the "real world benefits" of thinking sustainably.

"I think that it's a great thing to have a project that's hands-on and different," Ms

Durmaz said. "But it's also good to show my students that they don't have to always be vulnerable members of society, that they can help someone else and look outside, even globally."

The program encourages community engagement.

"I think getting out into the community and taking part in events or charity fundraisers that are close to home is definitely on the cards for the students, they can definitely contribute," Ms Durmaz said.

The class of seven students built three seats with the help of the mentor students, which Ms Durmaz said helped reinforce their lessons on socialising and communication.

"Some of my students are non-verbal, so they interact with pictures or sign language," she said. "What was good about having the mentors was the students were talking beyond just 'I want' to actual social conversations," Ms Durmaz said.

The SEATS program coordinator Christa Silvia said there were more than seven western Sydney schools taking part in the program.

"The program fits in with the school curriculum, but what I've found is that for things with a social impact, students with disabilities are often left out. But at Holroyd School, we found that here are students that were willing to make this global connection," Ms Silvia said.