Teacher Guidelines

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) describes what young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling. It is the foundation for their future learning, growth and active participation in the Australian community. It sets out essential knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities and provides a national standard for student achievement in core learning areas. http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/

ACARA is committed to the development of a high-quality curriculum for all Australian students, one that promotes excellence and equity in education. All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that addresses their individual learning needs.

Teachers will use the Australian Curriculum to develop teaching and learning programs that build on students' interests, strengths, goals and learning needs, and address the cognitive, affective, physical, social and aesthetic needs of all students.

Purpose

These materials are presented as a resource for principals, schools and teachers. They are intended to:

- help ensure that all students are able to access and participate in the Australian Curriculum
- provide advice as to how the three-dimensional design of the Australian Curriculum may be used to address the learning needs of all students
- provide specific advice with regard to meeting the learning needs of students with disability, gifted and talented students, and students for whom English is an additional language or dialect
- provide examples illustrating how students with diverse needs can access and participate in the Australian Curriculum.

  http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/StudentDiversity/Student-diversity-advice

ACARA is designed to include all learners and provides the framework for the development of individualised programs for students with disabilities and impairments. Some learners may not progress through the outcomes at an even rate or use more conventional methods of demonstrating learning, e.g. reading, writing and speaking. For these learners, consider the following points:

- Terms such as 'identify', 'explain', 'describe', 'assess', 'evaluate' are understood to include all forms of verbal and non-verbal methods to achieve these, such as:
    - signed communication, communication aids, pictographs e.g. Compic, photos
    - computer software e.g. word processors, spell checkers, word predictors, speech to text, text to speech
    - hardware e.g. Intellikeys, switches, Concept Keyboards
    - visual texts e.g. drawing, diagramming, voice synthesisers, large print, closed circuit televisions.
- Some students may need physical help with fine and gross motor tasks. Some students with disabilities may not be able to display the listed examples of indicators to demonstrate the achievement of an outcome. Some strands may present more difficulties for learners with particular impairments e.g. visual arts and viewing for those with vision impairment.
- While strategies and content may differ, activities must be age appropriate for all students.
- The learning environment may need to be structured to create learning opportunities for some students.

Creating an inclusive curriculum means to adapt the curriculum, not the student, so that all learners are able to participate in the learning. Diversity is the norm not the exception when we consider the different abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds of students in the classroom. To meet this challenge of diversity, it is suggested that educators use flexible instructional materials, techniques and strategies.

There are three principles[1] that guide the adaptation and delivery of the curriculum. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach that helps to identify and address barriers to learning for all learners.

Principle I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation
1. Provide options for perception e.g. customise the display of information
2. Provide options for language and symbols e.g. options that illustrate key concepts non-linguistically
3. Provide options for comprehension e.g. options that provide or activate

Principle II. Provide Multiple Means of Expression
4. Provide options for physical action e.g. options for accessing tools and assistive technologies
5. Provide options for expressive skills and fluency e.g. options in the media for communication

Principle III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement
8. Provide options for recruiting interest e.g. options that increase individual choice and autonomy
9. Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence e.g. options that vary levels of challenge and support
10. Provide options for self-regulation e.g. options that develop self-assessment

Source http://www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html

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[1] Universal Design for Learning http://www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html

Curriculum differentiation[2]

Differentiation allows you to plan and carry out varied approaches to *content* (what a student learns), *process* (how the student learns and how you teach), and *product* (how the student demonstrates what they've learned) in anticipation of and in response to student differences in *readiness* (prior mastery of knowledge, understandings and skills) *interest* (the student's curiosity and passion) and *learning profile* (how the student learns best).

Four guiding principles for planning for curriculum differentiation[3]:

• Have high expectations of all students.
• Make knowledge and materials.
• Vary instructional formats frequently.
• Allow multiple ways for students to show what they have learned.

When planning a unit of work, some teachers find it helpful to ask[2]:
• Do I need to make any adjustments at all?
• Do some learners need material presented differently
  - perception/visually
  - language and symbols
  - level of comprehension
  - physical access
• Would some technology help some/all students?
  - low-tech – printed on brightly coloured paper for contrast
  - high tech – electronic versions
• Will all the students engage in this mode?
  - consider individual choice and autonomy
  - vary levels of challenge and support
  - provide a means for self-regulation
• Should some students present their work differently?
  - physical access
  - options for communication (various media)
  - options for managing information
• Will all students be assessed in the same way?
  - vary criteria
  - negotiate criteria with students
• Will some students need additional or different goals?
  - vary criteria

General differentiation strategies

Shaddock, Giorcelli and Smith[2] outline several differentiation strategies that apply to all learners.

Presenting learning experiences as 'respectful tasks' and providing scaffolding will limit the number of adaptations needed.

Respectful tasks	These are tasks that are interesting and engaging for every student, provide access to essential knowledge, understandings, and skills and refer to tasks that are neither boring nor frustrating.
Scaffolding	This refers to any kind of differentiating that provides the support needed for a student to succeed. It also means that learning is presented in a layered manner to develop student mastery and, as a result, confidence.

Specific differentiation strategies[2]

Finding entry points	Explore content through different modes e.g. concrete, multimedia, narrative, drama.
Cubing	Create a cube for each group of learners and describe a different task related to the subject on each of its faces
Flexible grouping	Use co-operative strategies such as jigsaw, round robin, to create groups. Ensure that learners have opportunity to work with students who are like themselves and dissimilar from themselves.
Learning centres/stations	This is a strategy for differentiating instruction that provides for centres, or stations or collections of materials that learners use to explore topics or practise skills (tasks can be adjusted to readiness, interest, or learning profile).
Learning contracts	This provides for an agreement about work between student and teacher. Contracts should be in writing. The student must be helped to set realistic targets and have a right to have the role and function of the contract explained to them and to renegotiate when the contract isn't working.
Data-driven decision making	Data-driven decision-making is a teaching practice that gets better information about students, to enhance student learning and to inform teacher practice. Elements of data-driven instruction are good baseline data; measurable instructional goals; frequent formative; assessment and focused instructional interventions.

[2] Shaddock, A., Giorcelli, L., & Smith, S. *Students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms*: A resource for teachers.
[3] Jorgensen, C *Restructuring High Schools for All Students*

The Inclusive Classroom

Inclusive practice

Inclusive practice begins with each teacher's understanding of the importance of being personally inclusive of students, parents and of others, of treating each student as an individual, of disregarding labels, of learning from good practitioners and quality practice research and reflecting on their own practice.

Research shows that teachers, particularly how they teach, are a key determinant of student outcomes, second only to the contribution each student brings to their learning[4].

Who are the learners with special educational needs?

Children with special needs can include children with learning disability, speech or language disorders, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, autism, hearing impairment, vision impairment, deafness, blindness, orthopaedic impairments, traumatic brain injury, chronic health conditions, severe and multiple disabilities, ADHD, and learning problems due to second language difficulties and giftedness.

'The instructional needs of all these children are much more alike than they are different …in general all children with special needs require what has been described as teaching that is efficient, intensive, relentless, carefully sequenced, and carefully monitored for effects – in other words, high quality effective instruction.' Research acknowledges that good teaching for students with disabilities is good teaching for all students.

How do I create an inclusive classroom?

To create and support an inclusive environment, teachers need to examine their beliefs around inclusion. In an inclusive setting the following practices are evident:

- Teachers work from learners' strengths, not their disabilities, to focus on genuine learning needs.
- Teachers work in ways that are genuinely flexible and responsive to group members.
- Teachers make adjustments to the pace of work and scaffold the learning.
- Teachers adopt a team approach with teaching assistants and special education staff.

- Teachers use teaching practices that are effective for all students and adapt these as necessary, rather than using a separate set of techniques for students with disabilities.
- Teachers use a variety of instructional styles and media to teach and to provide opportunity for learners to demonstrate their strengths.
- Teachers have high expectations of all their students and provide scaffolding in order for them to achieve.
- Teachers focus on typical behaviours and trends appropriate to the age group.

How do I plan in an inclusive classroom?

Teachers need to consider how all students will access the curriculum, what reasonable adjustments need to be made and what evidence-based teaching practices will be used. This guideline outlines information to direct teachers in these considerations.

1. How will all students access the curriculum?
   a. Refer to the section on the Australian Curriculum and curriculum differentiation.
   b. When planning, consider: what *all* students will learn, what *most* students will learn and what *some* students will learn.
2. What reasonable adjustments need to be made?
   a. If a student has been identified through the pre-referral process as having a disorder or disability, a formal Education Adjustment Plan is required.
   b. Often adjustments are beneficial for all students in relation to interacting with their learning and expressing their understanding and comprehension (refer to the section on reasonable adjustments).
3. What evidenced-based teaching practices should I select?
   a. ACARA's Personal & Social Capabilities enable teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a tangible and practical manner. Personal and social capability skills are addressed in all learning areas and at every stage of a student's schooling. This enables teachers to plan for the teaching of targeted skills specific to an individual's learning needs to provide access to and engagement with the learning areas thus assisting in designing for learning.

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[4] (Hattie John (2005) *What is the Nature of Evidence that Makes a Difference to Learning?* University of Auckland ACER Conference 2005

How do I organise my classroom?

Quality strategies benefit all students.

Strategies include:
• Establish structures and routines for transitions between activities, start of day and end of day, and working in groups.

• Have clearly defined physical spaces to store and manage equipment and provide a space for 'down time' for learners with ASD or behavioural issues.
• Give extra wait time for responses.
• Use visual prompts and cues e.g. class timetable, class code, routines presented non-linguistically.
• Label boxes on shelves with non-linguistic representations as well as text

e.g.

How do I work with the extra staff? You may be in a school where you have support staff in your classroom or a student may receive funding for their learning and the schools uses this for extra staff.

As a small support team it is essential to spend time in building relationships and clarifying mutual expectations. To ensure that this working relationship is most productive for everyone involved, there are some important points to consider:

• Use the key roles and responsibilities outlined in the job description. Note that while teachers and special education support assistants plan together for student learning that may be supervised by the teaching assistant, the educational outcomes for all students remain the responsibility of the class teacher.
• Remember to consult with or include a senior teacher or special education teacher in your planning.
• Regular meetings instead of meetings 'on the fly' will be more effective and less stressful. Negotiate ways that your team can be released to meet.
• Develop an efficient communication system to share your planning guidelines with special education support assistants/special education teachers – this is a worthwhile

investment especially when you have multiple staff working in your room.

Concerns raised by researchers [5] that teachers need to be mindful of include:

• the tendency for the learning of students with a disability not being managed by the person best qualified to do it – the teacher
• the possibility for the learner with a disability to be working on a separate program from the main class curriculum in which their peers are engaged
• the potential for the learner to become dependent on the teaching assistant, which is counterproductive to increasing their independence
• the possibility that continual student to adult interactions will reduce peer-to-peer social interactions.

Successful ideas include:
• having the special education support assistant working with small groups including the learner with a disability, related to the class
• the special education support assistant supervising the class while the class teacher is target teaching the student with a disability individually or in a group
• the special education support assistants preparing material for the whole class
• arranging the classroom seating so that the special education support assistant can assist the students around the learner with a disability and is in close proximity to the learner should they require assistance
• rotating special education support assistants across classes and students to develop their knowledge and skills and also so the student works with a variety of adults.

The best use of this valuable human resource occurs when special education support assistants have opportunities for ongoing professional learning and are part of flexible teams.

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[5] Department of Education and Training Tasmania (2006) *Getting Started: A guide for teachers of students with disabilities in regular schools*