Curriculum 4 all

A Report of the Australian Symposium:
Students with Disability in the Australian Curriculum

From the Board

On a cold and chilly almost winter Canberra morning in late May 2017, educators from across Australia from all sectors and jurisdictions came together with the common goal to explore how to increase learning opportunities for students with disability not yet participating in the current curriculum map in the Australian Curriculum.

This opportunity was created by the leadership within by the Australian Special Education Principals Association (ASEPA) who worked with the Australian Department of Education to secure Canberra as a venue for this solutions-focused deep dive conversation with educators.

In the intervening two years since the meeting many obstacles have conspired to delay the publication of this report. The Board sincerely thanks everyone for their combined efforts and contributions to get us to publication.

I am not heartened to comment that the issues that were all too prevalent in 2017 are still applicable today. School Leaders are responsible for the learning of all students in their schools. It is that responsibility, both moral and accountable, that ASEPA are most keen to be able to support.

On behalf of the Board of ASEPA I present this report to you, we hope that the views and ideas captured here provide additional data and commentary that supports the learning opportunities for our most vulnerable students in Australian schools. It is the learning opportunities for this group of students that this report is dedicated to. It is ASEPA's firm belief that teachers and schools with the right tools can be enabled to more easily plan, assess and evaluate for these students.

Fiona Forbes
Professor of Practice
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Board Chair ASEPA
November 2019

Executive Summary

This Report comprises an account of a symposium, Curriculum for All: Students with Disability in the Australian Curriculum, convened by the Australian Special Education Principals' Association [ASEPA] in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training.

Two core issues were interrogated during the seminar: How are we using the Australian Curriculum to design and enact quality curriculum for Australian students with disability? And What actions for improvement, if any, are needed?

The symposium consisted of a group of invited teachers, school leaders and other key stakeholders, all involved in designing and delivering the curriculum to students with disabilities [SWD] in schools. Alongside formal presentations and group discussion a series of poster sessions were provided, to offer a view of the 'curriculum in action'.

As the context to a focused professional discussion amongst invited delegates the Report first provided a brief scoping of the background to the seminar, for which the Review of the Australian Curriculum [2014] and the Senate Report, Access to Real Learning: The impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability [2016)] were principal catalysts.

The symposium confirmed the importance and practical usefulness of the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [ACARA] developed guidelines, *Using the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students'* [Student Diversity materials, ACARA, n.d.]. Delegates, however, noted that diverse and in-depth specialist knowledge was required to maximise their application in school settings.

A national overview of the existing position in States and Territories was also provided and results of a pre-symposium survey was shared by Sylvia Flato (ASEPA Board). This acknowledged the relevance of the Australian Curriculum for SWD, whilst noting the absence of wider understanding of its adaptation for this group of students in some mainstream settings.

Dr Debbie Price (University of South Australia) presented a keynote, which highlighted the opportunities inherent within the Australian Curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners, as well as the ongoing challenges. Proposed models of curriculum design and enactment were then described in a presentation by Tracey Chappell (Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders - QASEL).

Delegates at the seminar explored a range of ongoing dilemmas and opportunities for progress in respect of curriculum planning and practice. These included assessment, personalised learning, the role of participant 'voices' and the implications for teacher education and professional learning

A series of commentaries on the issues considered concluded the event. Notably, these incorporated recommendations relating to such germane concerns as policy-making, curriculum design and inclusive pedagogy.

The resulting report contains illustrative materials and a supporting appendix, which in themselves will provide stimulus for professional thinking on wide-ranging curriculum matters.

Foreword

Undertaking current work in Portugal, The Netherlands, Pakistan and Turkey, as well as with the United Kingdom, has caused me to reflect on the urgent questions being raised at the heart of the various projects within which I am engaged. A constant thematic relates to what happens in classrooms and work spaces, rather than the (admittedly crucial) policy dimensions that inform these actions. It appears to me that we have been rather deflected from the key task of teaching all students – the what, why and how of our curricula. A corresponding resurgence of attention to this vital aspect of the work we do has therefore been reassuringly apparent in the last few years.

An indication of the recent and ongoing dilemmas and responses to this oversight can be found in commentaries emerging on the international stage in recent years. IBE/UNESCO (2016) acknowledges the scale of the challenge. Providing an effective education for all children represents a major 21st century endeavour, given recent Global Monitoring Reports which point out that 58 million children have no formal educational inputs whatsoever. In striving to secure access and equity in the curriculum offer, schools must recognise that 'every student is an individual with unique characteristics' and that 'a key challenge for teachers is catering simultaneously for all the different learning needs' (Temo, 2018).

Anyone accessing Curriculum For All will need no convincing of the imperatives in taking this task forward. Accessing a high-quality, inclusive curriculum for all learners will ensure that provision is not compromised by poverty, disability, social class, gender, race or learning difficulty. This document, emerging from discussions during a seminar event held in Canberra, reveals the extent to which the Australian professional community acknowledges the importance of a renewed focus on curriculum.

The content of the ensuing report is indicative of a deep consideration of the pressing issues which are correctly exercising the minds of school leaders and classroom teachers in respect of 'access for all'. Critical reflections of the contemporary implications of diverse learner populations and learning spaces, inclusive yet specialist and individualised teaching and the centrality of continued professional enhancement are thus predictable components. Yet, though these 'usual suspects' are the leitmotif of quality provision for all, including those students of difference, they are too easily taken for granted. Not least, they are assumed to prevail without question in some mainstream schools and settings.

This important document therefore marks a further contribution by ASEPA to the progress being made towards greater systemic inclusion. It is not deflected by alternative agendas or vested interests. At its heart is a professional commitment to enhancing curricular practices in all our schools. As such it represents a building block in our quest to better understand, and respond to, the education of all students in our school communities. Stakeholders in Australia - and beyond - will derive great benifit from it being widely disseminate.

Philip Garner
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5 October 2019

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Acknowledgements

Background

This is a report of the Australian symposium, Curriculum for All: Students with Disability in the Australian Curriculum, convened by the Australian Special Education Principals' Association (ASEPA) in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. The symposium was held in Canberra on 31 May 2017.

The purpose of the symposium was to support special education teachers, principals and other leaders to share their understandings and practice in relation to designing and enacting curriculum opportunities for students with disability within the context of the Australian Curriculum (AC).

Specifically, the symposium was held in response to the Review of the Australian Curriculum (2014) and the Senate Report, Access to Real Learning: The impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability (2016). A letter distributed widely to schools from then ASEPA President, Lorraine Hodgson (dated 2 May 2017) articulated the purpose of the symposium as: ...providing an opportunity to learn what is offered in each jurisdiction, what is happening in schools and then [to] set some ways forward. The President set the symposium as an opportunity to 'talk and think together: a rare opportunity and so important for the future education of students with disability in Australia'.

Approximately 50 delegates attended from all jurisdictions, with the exception of Tasmania (who were invited but were unable to send a representative.) Delegates included those from state curriculum authorities, education departments, universities and school-based personnel.

The nature of the AC—and how it supports learning experiences for students with disability—is examined later in this report. It is pivotal to note at the outset that the AC offers a resource for use by Australian teachers to design and enact programs to nurture 'all young Australians to become: successful learners, confident and creative individuals; and active and informed citizens' (Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008). The AC provides a platform to support the design and enactment of curriculum for students with disability to engage with three dimensions: the learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. Specifically, the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) has developed guidelines, 'Using the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students' (Student Diversity materials, ACARA, n.d.) to offer direction to teachers and those who support teachers to cater for diverse learning needs.

A key theme of this report is the extent to which symposium delegates and those who responded to a pre-symposium survey are familiar with the AC Student Diversity materials and, in particular, the guidelines referred to above. These guidelines consist of three key steps and are referred to in the AC materials and here as 'the flow chart'. It is important to flag at the outset the considerable depth of curriculum, assessment and pedagogical understandings, along with professional knowledge related to specific diverse needs, that are required to use the flow chart to meet the needs of students with disability. The flow chart is summarised in the table following.

Table 1: A summary of the flow chart

A summary of the guidelines, 'Using the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students' (with direct extracts italicised)

1. Teachers start with the AC *learning area content that aligns with their students' chronological age.*

2. Teachers are asked to *personalise the teaching and learning program by*:
   • *drawing from learning area content at different levels along the Foundation to Year 10 sequence to personalise age-equivalent learning area content-using the general capabilities and/or cross-curriculum priorities to adjust the learning focus of the age-equivalent learning area content*
   • *aligning individual learning goals with age-equivalent learning area content.*

Teachers assess students' progress through the Australian Curriculum in relation to achievement standards. Some students' progress will be assessed in relation to their individual learning goals. Teachers are also reminded that state and territories will influence the nature of assessment and reporting approaches.

Symposium Program

The program consisted of:
1. An overview of the day - Lorraine Hodgson (ASEPA National President)
2. Curriculum innovation - Dr Debbie Price (University of South Australia)
3. 'Snapshot: Curriculum for students with disability - Sylvia Flato (ASEPA Board)
4. Models for curriculum design and enactment - Tracey Chappell (QASEL Vice President)
5. Poster sessions - Representatives from States and Territories shared their practice in relation to delivering the Australian Curriculum to students with disabilities in a range of school settings
6. Workshop of Participants' Voices: 'Digging into issues and needs' in which delegates responded to questions provided and feedback from groups
7. Participants' Voices: 'Ideas and recommendations for the way forward'
8. Sharing and Feedback
9. Panel including Q&A
10. Summary and way forward - ASEPA National President

In the following section, a summary is provided of each of the key elements, where possible.

Overview of the session by the ASEPA President

Lorraine Hodgson, ASEPA President, identified the purpose of the day (outlined in the background above). The purpose was captured in the following professional inquiry questions:

- How are we using the Australian Curriculum to design and enact quality curriculum for Australian students with disability?
- What actions for improvement, if any, are needed?

The President briefly outlined the context and events that led to the symposium. Further, the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training was thanked for its support of the symposium. Delegates were reminded that they would be invited to propose possible recommendations that could be formally put to DET by the ASEPA Executive.

Keynote Presentation – Curriculum Innovation

The keynote emphasised the opportunities that exist within the Australian Curriculum to design and enact curriculum inclusive of the wide range of students including those with disability.

Specifically, Associate Professor Price identified the following 'Australian Curriculum achievements for students with disabilities 2008–2017' ('Curriculum Innovation: Students with disabilities included within the Australian Curriculum', 2017):

- Raised debate and consciousness of inclusion of SWDs in the AC
- Consultation and Students with Disabilities Advisory Group (ACARA)
- Recognition within ACARA and AC documentation
- Recommendations for adjustments
- Positive examples of worked samples, exemplars, resources
- Architecture – increased awareness of significant jumps between levels, introduction of 1a–1e
- Literacy 1a and 1b numeracy capabilities
- Raising expectations and opportunities for achievement.

Key issues were identified including:
- Inclusion across all curriculum
- Age versus developmental appropriateness
- What do we teach? — Explicit content and achievement standards versus flexibility and freedom
- How and what do we assess and report to show progression?
- Addressing pre-foundation complications
- Architecture: language, prioritisation, structure.

Issues associated with required curriculum innovation included the flagging of:

- Collective benefits of education
- Democratic purpose
- [The concept that] All students can move freely on a learning continuum
- Capabilities approach/language
- Cultural shift – all responsible for SWDs, embedded
- Education
- Universal Design
- Early Years
- Research informed – purposeful data
- Fierce advocacy
- Contextual: geographical variances.

'A snapshot of the states and territories: Curriculum for students with disability'

Sylvia Flato, ASEPA Board, highlighted salient points in relation to curriculum for students with disability. The following infographic is a summary of her presentation.

Pre-symposium survey

Background

ASEPA conducted an online survey ahead of the May 2017 symposium. The survey was entitled 'Curriculum 4 All: Current trends across Australia'. The survey was widely distributed throughout Australia with a total of 549 responses received from principals, teachers and other leaders in a range of educational settings. In 223 instances, additional written comments were provided. This indicates the commitment of school practitioners to working with ACARA to provide feedback with a view to improvement.

Approximately 90% of students with disability in Australia attend mainstream schools.[1]

Educators fail to recognise studnets with disabilitys as capable of learing.[1]

...best practice teaching for students with disability is in face best practice teaching for all students.[1]
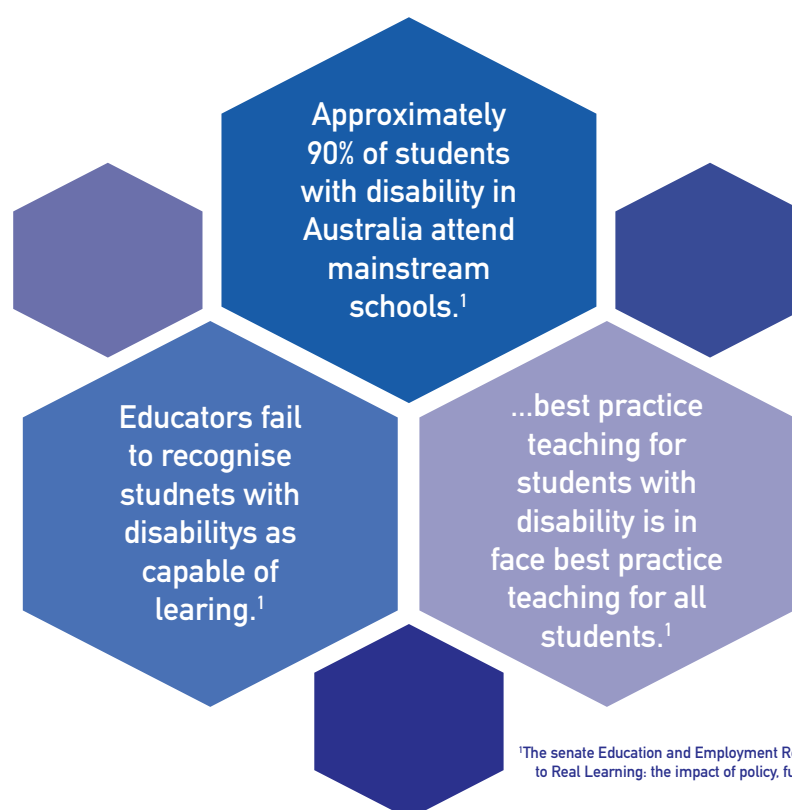
[1]The senate Education and Employment References Committee - Access to Real Learning: the impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability

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Employees surveyed using student diversity flow chart

% of Employees Surveyed

37.55%	62.45%
Using	Not Using

(Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100)

What they had to say[2]:
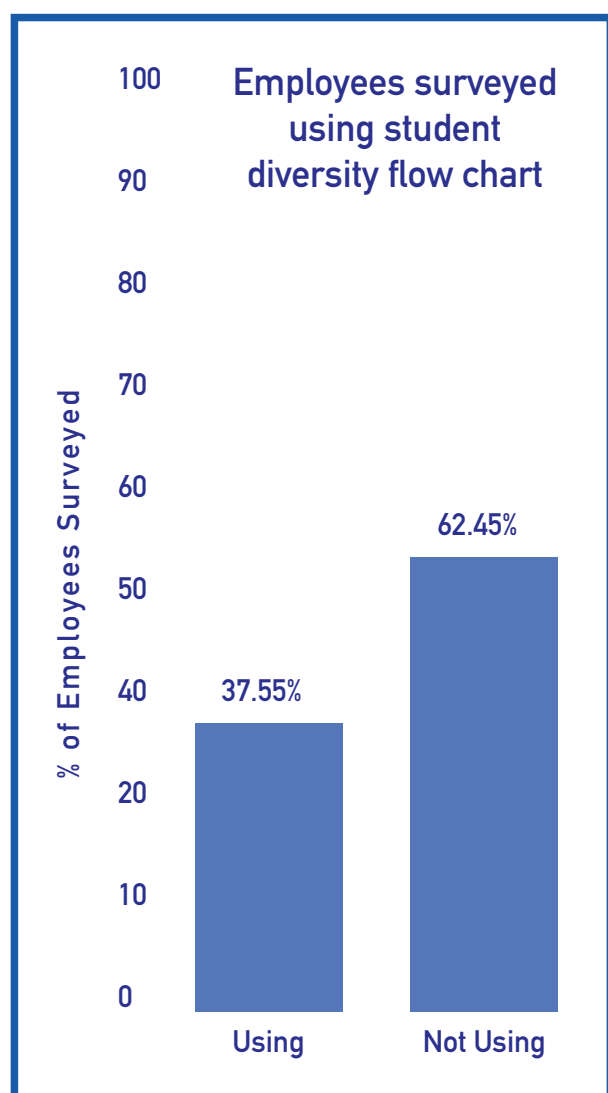
We would love to have more examples of schools demonstrating their effective implementation of the AC to show how it can be done, celebrated, and meet the needs of all students.

We are so very pleased to have a curriculum that includes all learners, even our learners whose focus for learning is through the Literacy General Capability.

More professional development for staff on how to differentiate for SWDs in mainstream classes would be benificial.

Examples aligned to the DDA would be benificial, examples for engaging with Senior secondary subjects through to year 7 across a range of subjects is required, not just core subjects.
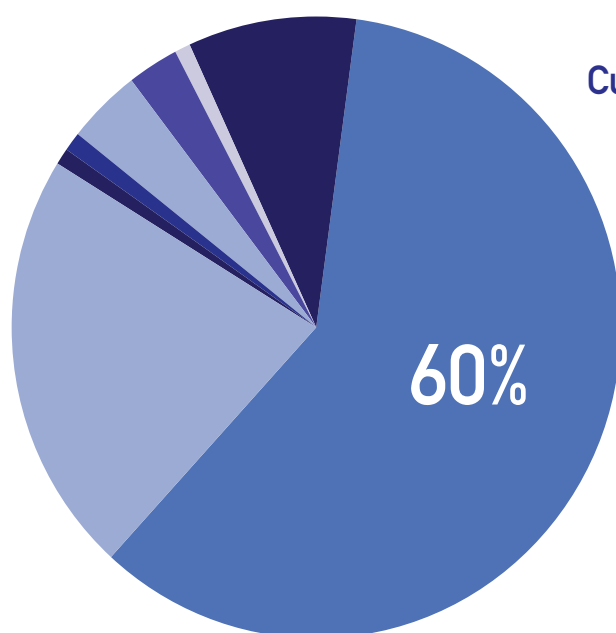
Curriculum used in surveyed Schools[2]

60%

- Australian
- State/Territory Mandated
- Commercially Produced
- System Developed
- School Developed
- Teacher Determined
- Other

Models for curriculum design and enactment

Tracey Chappell (QASEL) used an interactive app to highlight the main features of two major models currently in use to design curriculum for students with disability. The first model draws on a continuum of content Foundation to Year 10, positioning the learning within the age-equivalent content for the student. This model is informed by the flow chart. Another paradigm, developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the AusVELS, includes four stages, A to D, in the 'Towards Foundation Level'. In this model, teachers utilise the level that best matches the student's capability regardless of age. Ability Based Learning Education Support (ABLES) Tools have been developed to help identify students current level of ability foundation including level A to D to level 2.

Poster sessions

The following presented poster sessions in which they shared their practice.

Table 2: Presenters

Juanita Healy	Executive Director, Curriculum, Assessment and Strategic Policy, School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), WA
Kavi Razzaghi-Pour	Assistant Principal, Clarke Road School, NSW
Noelene Mason	Principal Malibu School, WA
Simon Vaughan	Principal, Melrose High School, ACT
Erin Smith	Learning Support Class teacher, Melrose High School, ACT
Tammy Rosling	Assistant Principal, Hamilton Disability Unit, Hamilton Secondary College, SA
Gail Williams	Regional Inclusive Education Coach, Darling Downs South West Region, State Schooling, QLD
Wendy Haynes	Principal, Acacia Hill School, NT
Jackie Lowther	Principal, Springvale Park Specialist Development School, VIC
Pennie Moffat	Principal Austin Hospital School, VIC

Each poster session demonstrated how a school, region or jurisdiction were implementing the AC.

Table 3: Poster session examples

Poster session by Gail Williams, QLD

The poster outlined a 'scan and assess' process to gather information about factors impacting on the outcomes for all students. The process involves teachers and leaders:

- Engaging in reflective conversations
- Scanning the local context in the widest possible sense
- Examining and interpreting data
- Examining overarching school documentation
- Collating and analysing information

Further information was also provided in relation to how regional support staff can assist the scan and assess process.

An infographic, providing an overview of the resources available to support curriculum design and enactment, is located in the appendix of this report.

Poster session by Pennie Moffat and Jackie Lowther, VIC

The poster outligned:

- The extensive research and approach undertaken in Victorian schools to implement the Victorian curriculum which incorporates the AC
- An overview of the program and objectives of students with disabilities
- Real life examples from a specialist development school and a hospital school.

Poster session by Juanita Healy, WA

The poster outlined:

- The process undertaken by SCSA to integrate an on-balance inclusive curriculum approach that complemented the WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline
- The extensive trial and validation that has been undertaken with stakeholders

A copy of the above presentations are located in an Appendix of this report.

Presenters reflected a commitment to the AC and most acknowledged they were at the beginning of their journey. They were focusing on the learning areas, and the content descriptions in particular, working to understand how to engage with these. All presenters shared positive impacts that the use of the AC had had on learning and teaching at their schools.

Participants' voices: Digging into issues and needs

Symposium delegates worked in 15 small groups to respond to four key questions during a 45-minute segment. The questions are listed in the table below.

Table 4: Digging into issues and needs questions

1. At the school level, what evidence can you cite of student learning within the context of the Australian Curriculum?
2. What values and beliefs about students with disabilities as learners are prevalent in Australian education? Do major educational stakeholders have high expectations for students with disability?
3. Has the Australian Curriculum made a difference to student learning and, if so, how do we know? What potential limitations, if any, are associated with individualised or personalised learning?
4. At the system level, what useful data exists to inform the development of policies to drive student learning? What data is required?

The key purpose of this segment of the symposium program was to stimulate delegates' thinking regarding the impact of the AC, the nature of values and beliefs regarding students with disability and the data currently being used or that could be used. The value of stimulating such thinking was to support delegates to distil the key issues and make possible recommendations to the ASEPA Executive. An analysis of this segment of the program is explored in the next section.

Participants' Voices: Ideas and recommendations

In a 45–minute segment during the symposium delegates worked in small groups to share and identify 'Ideas and possible recommendations for the way forward'. Delegates understood that the possible recommendations would be put forward for consideration by the ASEPA Executive.

The following table indicates the range of 'issues/key ideas/concerns' and the frequency of these.

Table 5: Issues/key ideas/concerns

Issue/key idea/concern	Number of groups raising issue (out of 7 groups)
1. Assessment	5
2. Need for information/process related to personalised learning	4
3. Need for professional learning	4
4. Nature of pre-service teacher education	3
5. Language use	3
6. Use of data	3
7. Need for curriculum models and resources	2
8. Lack of a nationally consistent approach	2
9. Acknowledgment of diversity	2

A sampling of issues and possible recommendations is provided in the next section in relation to the above nine areas with an emphasis on the issue considered most significant - assessment. It is important to note that significant overlaps occur among categories. For example, recommendations related to improvement in assessment of learning as a multi-purpose strategy:

• To identify individual and/or group student learning
• As a learning activity in itself and
• As a database for improved pedagogical and/or planning outcomes.

Some comments related to individual student assessment data.

Importantly, comments made in this section informed the commentary which constitutes the final section of this report.

1. Assessment

Symposium comments drew attention to the need to move beyond the dominant use of diagnostic assessment. Associated with this has been a lack of a culture of curriculum design and enactment which utilises other assessment purposes such as assessment 'as' and 'of' learning. A focus on diagnostic or assessment 'for' learning makes the use of the flow chart more difficult. An over-emphasis on diagnostic assessment can be 'at odds' with the call for teachers to start initial planning at a student's age-equivalent curriculum.

Recommendations in relation to assessment included the following:

[IAssessment/data from Group #1]
More research required for:
- *knowledge of authentic assessment—as/of/for*
- *data to support learning [use of] benchmarks [in an] ongoing [way]*
- *data to inform policy decision making*
- *differentiation.*

[Quality of assessment and reporting from Group #2]
- *Quality of assessment tasks*
- *Diversity of assessment tools*

[Quality evidence/data from Group #2]
- *Richness/approaches*
- *[assessment] for learning*
- *[assessment] as learning*
- *[assessment] of learning*

[Assessment from Group #5]
To ACARA
- *Shift student diversity to learning*
- *Pre-Foundations*
- *Provide examples of differentiation.*

[Apparent inconsistencies from Group #6]
- *Different interpretation from different jurisdictions/support/interpretation implementation [regarding] assessment and reporting*

2. Need for information/process related to personalised learning

Groups identified personalised learning directly in their listing of issues or possible recommendations. 'Quality personalised planning approaches' were identified as needed with the recommendations that '[there would be] sharing of personalised planning approaches/tools [with] evidence to demonstrate [how] they make a difference.

'Differentiating the curriculum for our diverse learners' was identified as an issue with possible recommendations including:

- More illustrations of practice [aligned to the] AC
- Support around differentiated instruction for students with disability
- Support around pedagogy [such as drawing on] Marzano and Lynch: The Art and Science of Teaching and the 8 learning management questions.

Participants listed 'student diversity' as the 'issue/key idea/concern' elaborating with the following concepts: 'personalised learning'; 'enactment of flow chart', as well as the '[need for capability building around] science' and 'learning areas'. This group suggested that video illustrations [of practice] was a possible recommendation.

In summary, personalised learning was mentioned directly and indirectly throughout this session. Further comments reinforced the notion that delegates consider professional learning, sharing of processes for enacting the AC, as well as the sharing of best practice to be pivotal in using the AC to respond to individual student needs.

3. Professional learning and 4. Pre-service teacher education

The need for professional learning was clearly identified as pivotal to delegates. Areas of 'students with disability', 'capacity building' '[the need for] expertise in special education and the mainstream', 'teacher confidence; values and embracing diversity', 'teacher expectations', 'raising consciousness of teachers', and 'exploring different models of professional learning for teachers and leaders—online processes and face-to-face communities of practice' were identified with the recommendation that 'a platform for teachers to share best practice be developed nationally' [aligned with] AITSL.

The need for professional learning is closely connected to issues related to pre-service teacher education. Group participants proposed that 'initial teacher education [does not equip teachers] to differentiate for all students'. The possible recommendations included the comment that 'universities need to address this immediately' and that 'pre-service teachers need more practicums to learn how to teach all students'. A set of possible recommendations included the following: '[the need to] embed special education into all university courses over four years', '[the inclusion of] practical sessions in year one' and 'early internships'.

5. Language use

The language used to describe or refer to students with disability was seen as an issue by participants. Participants proposed that a 'deficit language' was used leading to negative attitudes, proposing the use of 'positive language'. other participants identified the issue through a question, 'Is language the issue?'. The follow-up questions included the following: 'Are all students seen in the curriculum?' and 'Do we have equity and high expectations', raising the question as to whether the following were used when meeting the needs of students with disability: 'the Melbourne Declaration, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Standards for Education and the Disability Discrimination Act'.

It was proposed that:
• [Reference be made to] the diversity documents
• Professional learning is required for all teachers—to build teacher capacity, knowledge, confidence and values.

Framing it as a possible recommendation, the group posed the question, 'Is the flowchart sufficient?'

Participants citing language used in the AC in relation to matters pertaining to students with disability as problematic, proposed the use of 'regarding' in preference to 'regardless'. They also proposed that 'Language in the AC be reviewed'.

6. Data

Participants which cited 'data' as an issue or concern made reference to both data directly related to student learning as well as the use of data to inform decision making. Others proposed that 'understanding around the use of data' was an issue with possible recommendations around the need for [more] 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' data and data that would inform 'teaching and learning'.

7. Curriculum models and resources

Possible recommendations related to the need for articulation and greater sharing of curriculum models and resources included the following recommendations:

• Research, research, research
• What makes a difference to student learning
• Metro/rural/remote regional [responses]
• Intellectual vs sensory [approaches]
• Strategic alliances
• State jurisdictions
• Partnerships with universities/ACARA/DET.

In relation to the issue of 'curriculum models and curriculum resources' there was a call for research (first two dot points); responses to school geographic contexts; pedagogical approach, that is, intellectual or sensory approaches; and the need for strategic alliances (the final three dot points).

8. Lack of a nationally consistent approach

Participants listed the 'lack of a national approach' as an issue with the following possible recommendations:

- Nation-wide approach to curriculum [through] DET
- A shared vision
- Shared energies
- Quality learning for all learners.

They also identified the following as an issue, 'Lack of a system-wide approach for students with complex communication needs who are working at foundation level'. A possible recommendation was proposed:

- 'More shared knowledge/understanding which translates into practice'.

Other participants related concern to 'apparent inconsistencies'. They suggested that possible recommendations include:

- 'Quality control', '[greater use of] Scootle' and 'eLearning opportunities'.

9. Acknowledgment of diversity

These participants identified 'student diversity' as an issue, elaborating that 'there is no one size that fits all [thus requiring] strong professional knowledge [to] know the student and know the curriculum'. It was further proposed that 'values and beliefs' where a key issue in appreciating the 'diversity of "disability".

Panel presentation

During this segment, panelists responded to the following questions:

- How are we using the Australian Curriculum to design and enact quality curriculum for students with disability?
- What actions for improvement, if any, are needed?
- Do you have any further comments or recommendations?

Panelists included Dr Debbie Price (University of South Australia), Lorraine Hodgson (President, ASEPA), Juanita Healy (Executive Director, Curriculum, Assessment and Strategic Policy, SCSA, WA) and Gail Williams (Deputy Principal, Clifford Park Special School, Queensland), Karen Underwood (Manager, Participation, Achievement and Transitions, Department of Education and Training, Victoria)

Comments by panelists and audience members reinforced key messages articulated throughout the day. Appreciation for the Australian Curriculum serving the needs of all Australian students, including those with disability, was a key point. The need for high expectations of students, sharing of resources that illustrate the curriculum in practice and professional development opportunities were articulated.

Sum-up of session by ASEPA President

Lorraine Hodgson, ASEPA President, thanked people for sharing their understandings and practice throughout the symposium and articulated a commitment for the organisation to continue working with DET to improve learning for students with disability.

Commentary

In the next and final section of this report, four propositions are articulated. The development of these propositions was informed by comments and presentations of symposium delegates and responses in the pre-symposium survey. It is contended that these propositions are essential for the provision of quality schooling for all Australian students, including those with disability.

It is also contended that these propositions underpin the flow chart and would not need to be articulated here if every Australian school enacted this approach with fidelity.

It is also crucial to state that these propositions—or the flow chart itself— provide a platform without any detailed scaffolding or support. Other areas of the Australian Curriculum are well resourced and scaffolded. For example, elaborations to deepen understandings of the content descriptions and links to Scootle resources provide scaffolding in ways not visible in relation to design and enactment of curriculum for students with disability.

The four propositions are that high-quality schooling for students with disability—in relation to curriculum—requires that:
1. Policy makers acknowledge, and act on, the concept that Australian students with disability constitute a broadly heterogeneous group
2. Curriculum design draws on the full scope of the AC to design and enact personalised learning
3. Curriculum enactment is built on a robust repertoire of teaching strategies
4. Professional learning and planning support targets AC content and curriculum design elements.

1. Policy makers need to acknowledge, and act on, the concept that Australian students with disability constitute a broadly heterogeneous group

High quality schooling for students with disability requires policy makers to acknowledge, and act on, the belief that Australian students with disability constitute a broadly heterogeneous group.

'Students with disability' are a diverse group including those with physical, cognitive, sensory and social/emotional needs (based on the primary disability categories used in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: School Students with Disability, 2014).

The AC Student Diversity materials attempt to acknowledge this. The statements below, however, are ambiguous and lacking specificity. The lack of specificity in language results in not identifying explicitly students with 'cognitive needs'—that is, those with intellectual disability. These students are not made visible in the ACARA Student Diversity materials.

According to the materials:
- Many students with disability are able to achieve educational standards commensurate with their peers
- Not all students with a disability will require adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment
- Not all students requiring adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment will have a disability
- Students with disability requiring adjustments to one aspect of their learning may not require the same adjustment, if any, to another
- To comply with the Standards, consultation includes the student and parent as part of the process to personalise learning
- Students with the same disability may not require equivalent adjustments
- not every student with a disability will require ongoing adjustments
- Students with disability may also be gifted and talented and/or have English as an additional language or dialect
- To comply with the Standards, adjustment reviews occur regularly, and are changed or withdrawn where necessary.

A pervasive viewpoint of symposium delegates was the need for more specificity around the use of the AC for students with disability. In summary, the ACARA statements above offer some support to teachers but no specific and practical guidance or model to design and enact curriculum for students with 'cognitive needs' or intellectual disability. It is acknowledged that the intent of the AC authors was to provide a positive confident orientation towards student diversity including students with disability, however, **there is an absence of the complex range of pedagogical/curricula responses needed to provide 'educational justice' for all students.**

ACARA calls on teachers to access state and territory resources. The use of content description elaborations and links to Scootle is not replicated for those designing and enacting curriculum for students with disability. **The call here is for rigour and specificity in curriculum design for students with disability.** Specifically, a model that supports curriculum decision making for all students is required.

A key element of an inclusive curriculum model is the acknowledgement of the important role of popular culture in all students' lives. The enacted curriculum must respond to students' membership in the broader social group constituted by their year level identity. Most students with disability—like most of their peers—thrive with a curriculum that resonates with the broader socio-cultural milieu of their age cohort, ethnic background, location and so on. Popular culture as a resource for curriculum design is just as important for students with disability as it is for other learners. It appears that in some areas—from classroom practice to policy making—the 'disability' is used to 'other' the student and minimises the perception of how much in common the student with disability has—and wants to have—with their year level/class group.

Students with disability require, and are entitled to, programs of study that draw on the full scope of the AC—and its enactment that draws on the socio-cultural worlds beyond the classroom. Limited approaches to curriculum design are explored in the next section.

2. Curriculum design must draw on the full scope of the AC

Delegates overwhelmingly expressed the view that the range of stakeholders in Australian education, including policy makers, do not appreciate the diversity of this cohort of students or hold high expectations of students with disability.

High quality schooling for students with disability—with high expectations for student performance—requires curriculum that draws on the full scope of the AC to design and enact personalised learning. Further, some might argue that the flow chart—by its nature—represents a **'bolt on'** approach to serving the needs of students with disability. A frequent comment by symposium delegates and pre-symposium survey respondents related to the **difficulty in locating the flow char**t or a lack of knowledge regarding its existence. The AC website does not foreground or privilege resources or models that support responding to the needs of students with disability. For example, reference to, and advice within, specific learning area rationales would elevate the status of serving the needs of students with disability—and reflect the inclusive spirit of the Melbourne Declaration. A further specific example could include links from content descriptions to Scootle resources to serve the range of students with disability.

The next section outlines two ways in which the full scope of the AC is not made available to students with disability. Narrowed curriculum opportunities result from undervaluing and underestimating the capacity of students with disability to learn and achieve. Two curriculum responses to this undervaluing and underestimation are outlined below. One response is based on the use of a narrow range of general capabilities and the other is based on the use of learning area content only. The comments are made against the backdrop that the AC is three-dimensional, consisting of learning area content, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities.

A limited curriculum based on some general capabilities

An assumption still pervasive among some educators is that all students—regardless of the nature of their disability—require a narrowly-defined curriculum. A narrowed curriculum option silences the richness of the AC, as well as the needs, aspirations and entitlements of students with disability. The use of literature within English to support identity formation, that is, to support students to explore who they are and who they want to become, for example, is negated. Opportunities for students to engage in the world around them with awe and curiosity in humanities and social sciences are denied. The exploration of phenomena from a science viewpoint is not foregrounded in a narrowly conceptualised curriculum. The aesthetics of the range of subjects within the arts and the opportunities for students to express themselves in these ways does not feature in a narrow curriculum.

Such an approach is also described here as a 'single-dimension' curriculum as it privileges a selection of the general capabilities that include extended continua, that is the literacy, numeracy, and personal and social capabilities. As such, this approach does not draw on the three AC dimensions: learning areas, the full range of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

All of these dimensions are drawn upon in the AC guidelines, 'Using the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students' (see Table 1). The suggested sequence begins with the learning area content that aligns with students' chronological age. The flow chart calls for teachers' use of appropriate content from the Foundation to Year 10 sequence that will support progress from the learner's current location. It is then suggested that the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities are utilised to personalise the learning for students. The spirit of the Melbourne Declaration lives here: all students are entitled to access and participate in the Australian Curriculum. It is argued here, however, that a range of factors combines to create a pervasive culture of a 'single dimension' or narrowed curriculum. Some practitioners and policymakers might bring a narrowed predisposition to the reading of the AC Student Diversity materials.

At least two points could be made here. Firstly, the explication of how the flow chart is intended to work in practice might be insufficient to guide practitioners. Secondly, the examples provided in the section, 'Using the general capabilities might operate inadvertently to produce a narrow, 'single dimension' curriculum. In the section, 'Using the general capabilities', advice is provided regarding the use of the general capabilities—literacy, numeracy, and personal and social capability—in order to 'personalise learning'. The use of the other four general capabilities are not explored as ways to personalise learning. These general capabilities include:

- Information and communication technology capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding.

The above section has outlined the limitations of a general capabilities focus—and within that a focus on a narrow selection of the general capabilities. Also limiting for students with disability is a single-dimension curriculum based on learning area content to the exclusion of the general capabilities. This approach is explored in the next section.

A limited curriculum based on learning area content

Delegates were vociferous in their calls for curriculum models and for processes for building understandings of those models. Delegates expressed satisfaction that there was learning area content on which they could draw to design and enact the learning and teaching to which students with disability are entitled.

The AC is more than a collection of content descriptions in a range of learning areas. All students are entitled to a program of study that supports them to engage with learning area concepts and skills bolstered by the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities. Even though the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are embedded in the content descriptions that constitute the learning areas, such capabilities or priorities will not be built without dedicated focus on these as they are relevant to various areas of study.

While all Australian students are entitled to curriculum that draws on the three dimensions of the AC, the learning areas, the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities, it might be students with disability who gain most from the interweaving of the right balance of the three dimensions. The AC literacy continuum with its pre-Foundational levels offers literacy and numeracy standards through which students can work—while engaging in learning area content aligned to or modified from their age-equivalent curriculum.

As indicated above, all students—including those with disability—are entitled to engage with the full scope of the AC. In order to ensure the AC entitlement for all students—the key term, 'adjustment', needs to be better understood in relation to the AC flow chart. The notion of 'adjustments' is explored in the next section.

'Curriculum adjustments' in the AC Student Diversity materials constitute the flow chart information. In other words, the three steps summarised in Table 1 at the outset of this report, provide a sequence for making curriculum adjustments to support all students, including those with disability. The AC materials identify further 'adjustments' to the use of the Australian Curriculum: instructional and environmental adjustments.

AC materials identify 'instructional adjustments' as including 'explicit and systematic instruction', 'levels of prompting', identifying key vocabulary for explicit instruction' and so on. These 'adjustments' could be more productively viewed as elements of an effective teaching repertoire. AC examples of 'environmental adjustments' include: 'use of support personnel', 'providing access to alternative equipment and furnishings', 'changes to buildings and classrooms' and so on. Again, these are strategies which would be utilised by teachers in supporting the full range of students. In summary, the AC instructional and environmental adjustments—beyond those required for students with sensory impairments—do not support teacher understandings of how to enact the flow chart.

There was clear commitment among symposium delegates to enacting personalised learning approaches that utilise the full scope of the AC. Delegates articulated a desire for greater evidence and illustration of practice in order to enact the flow chart with fidelity. Renewed conversation around these issues is required.

3. Curriculum enactment requires a robust repertoire of teaching strategies

Teaching is the conduit between the curriculum and student learning. Symposium delegates acknowledged that ACARA's responsibility is curriculum, assessment and reporting but identified the need for a robust repertoire of teaching strategies in order to enact the flow chart. Teachers' repertoires of strategies need to be more extensive when working with students with disabilities—and almost every Australian classroom has students with disability. The AC materials do not assist teachers who do not have deep repertoires of pedagogical practice to support the learning of students with disability. Symposium delegates identified the need for capability building in relation to 'teaching and learning' and 'differentiation'.

ACARA utilises NAPLAN data to support jurisdictions to understand the needs of learners. ACARA does not provide an equivalent data set related to the learning of those students whose intended curriculum enactment is designed using the flow chart. There is no system-level data-informed decision making to serve the needs of students with disability. The jurisdictions do not receive any information that confirms or challenges the pedagogical repertoires appropriate for this cohort of students.

Findings from the symposium and the survey—along with the above propositions —have informed the next section on the pivotal role of professional learning and planning support.

4. Pivotal role of professional learning and planning support

High quality schooling for students with disability requires professional learning and planning support that targets AC content and curriculum design elements.

Teachers and those supporting teachers require deep understandings and skills in a broad range of areas in order to design and enact high quality curriculum for all students—and especially so for those students with disability.

Professional understandings related to the understandings and skills particular to each learning area form the foundation of what is required. The way in which general capabilities can be built through the learning area content is also essential, as is the knowledge of cross-curriculum priorities.

Approaches to ensure alignment of curriculum, assessment and teaching/learning experiences, including the front-ending of assessment, are pivotal to the design and enactment of high-quality schooling. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the way in which teachers and those who support them utilise the literacy continuum, for example, and interweave it with the age-equivalent learning area content. Further, the ways in which understandings from more than one learning area can be incorporated to constitute 'purposefully connected curriculum' (Nayler, 2014) or integrated curriculum are also required in a teacher's repertoire.

Professional understandings of what is developmentally appropriate is a further area for teacher professional learning and planning support. Equally crucial—and often neglected in design and enactment of curriculum for students with disability—are teacher understandings of the socio-cultural milieu of their students.

Symposium delegates identified a critical need for pre-service education to ensure that graduates engage in programs of study that privilege curriculum models drawing on the three dimensions of the AC, alignment of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, as well as the further areas identified above.
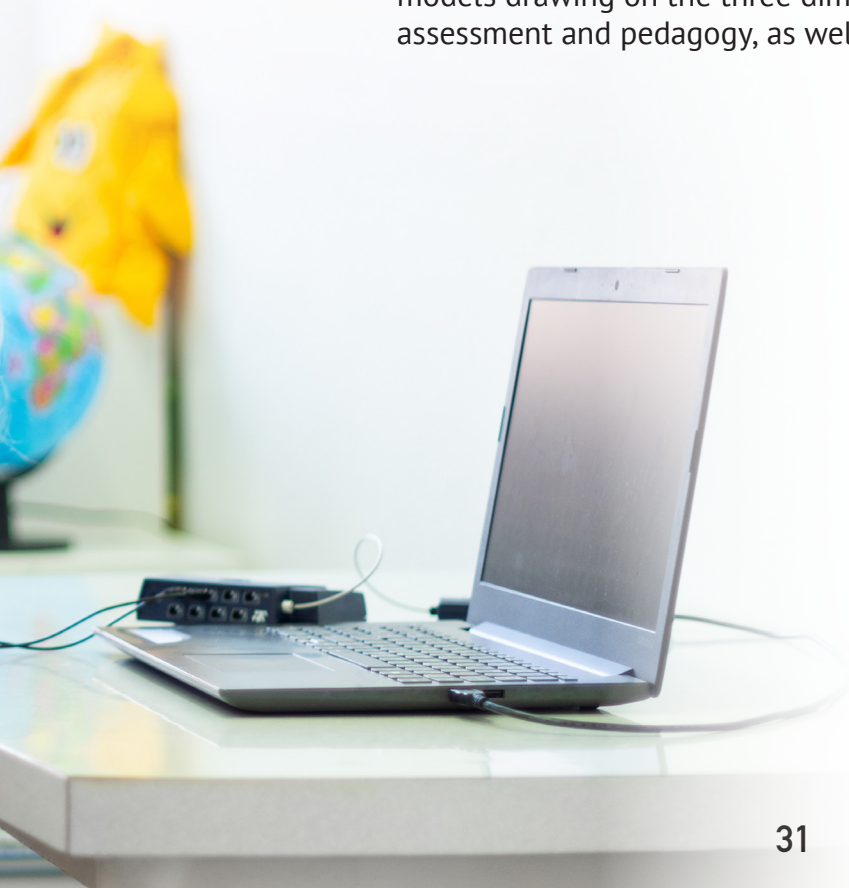
Conclusion

This report provides an overview of key discussions and conclusions made at the Australian symposium, Curriculum for All: Students with Disability in the Australian Curriculum. It also draws on extensive feedback from a survey conducted prior to the symposium. Themes emerging from the symposium have been explored. Specifically, delegates identified areas of concern.

These areas related to:
- Assessment
- Need for information and processes related to personalised learning
- Need for professional learning
- The nature of pre-service education
- Language use
- Use of data
- Need for curriculum models and resources
- Lack of a nationally consistent approach
- Acknowledgement of diversity.

From the discussion surrounding these issues a set of four propositions has been developed by the author of this report. These propositions include the following:

1. Policy makers need to acknowledge, and act on, the concept that Australian students with disability constitute a broadly heterogeneous group
2. Curriculum design needs to draw on the full scope of the AC to design and enact personalised learning
3. Curriculum enactment requires a robust repertoire of teaching strategies
4. Professional learning and planning support that targets AC content and curriculum design elements is required.

Overwhelmingly, symposium delegates were optimistic that the AC provides opportunities for students with disability that had not previously existed. The articulation of standards paves the way for extending the entitlement of high-quality curriculum to all students, including those with disability.

The words of two symposium delegates are included here—the first delegate points to the essential platform provided by the AC and the second identifies some of the next steps required.

The Australian Curriculum forms the backbone which is building on using knowledge of students, how they engage, [their] interests, curriculum focus and topics.

We would love to have more examples of schools demonstrating their effective implementation of the AC to show how it can be done, celebrated, and [used to] meet the needs of their students.

Symposium delegates look forward to an educational context in which all stakeholders have high expectations for the learning and achievement of students with disability—and that all students experience the curriculum to which they are entitled.

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Poster presentation: Gail Williams, Darling Downs South West Region, Queensland

The Australian Curriculum—Queensland

With a focus on the Darling Downs South West region

P-12 CARF —A whole school approach to support student learning

Every student has the ability to learn and should be able to demonstrate progress in their learning.

A whole school approach ensures a cohesive response to diverse learning needs and consistent practice in a culture of ongoing improvement which sets high expectations, monitors student progress with school-wide analysis and discussion of student achievement data, and supports student learning with quality teaching focused on improving the achievement of every student. A whole school approach to curriculum provision, using a continuum of support, caters for the learning needs of all students.

Comprehensive resources such as the **Whole school approach to support student learning modules**, **and C2C SWD** materials have been developed to support teachers of students with disability to provide curriculum that meets their individual learning needs.

DET—State Schools Strategy, P-12 CARF and key supporting documents

OneSchool

A software suite that supports flexible, sustainable and consistent teaching, learning and administrative processes. OneSchool supports schools in student management, curriculum and learning management, performance reporting and analysis. OneSchool develops its functionality, related to the Student Plan, informed by DET policy. The Student Plan function provides schools with one place to store and use information about a student. It includes - Personalised Learning— recording learning characteristics, impacts on learning and planned response. Individual Curriculum Plan— used to record curriculum decisions for students who are taught and assessed in a higher or lower year level of the Australian Curriculum than their same-age peers.

OneSchool

DDSW region

...is supported in curriculum decisions for students with disability by a Head of Curriculum—Diverse Learners who provides advice and support to the region and individual schools.

This flowchart is part of a suite of resources developed by the region to support curriculum decisions and school processes for students with diverse learning needs.

DDSW region

Abilities Based Learning Education
Western Australia
(ABLE*WA*)

Juanita Healy
Executive Director
Curriculum, Assessment and Strategic Policy

2017/

Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline

Kindergarten to Year 10

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) is committed to providing a curriculum that is inclusive of students' individual strengths and needs in order for every child in Western Australian schools to achieve their full potential.

Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) to ABLE*WA*

- The Authority carefully watched the ABLES curriculum and Assessment work which emerged from the partnership between the Department of Education and Training, Victoria and the University of Melbourne.

- The Authority negotiated the use of the ABLES curriculum, assessment tool and suite of pedagogical resources to trial with an ABLE*WA* Validation Trial Group of schools, in Semester 1, 2015.

- Additional schools were then encouraged to join a bigger trial group, via an Expression of Interest, to use the resources during Semester 2, 2015. The total number of trial schools was approximately 124 schools.

- Feedback obtained by the trial schools was used to customise the curriculum, assessment tool and professional learning resources to suit the needs of Western Australian schools.

- An ABLE*WA* Steering Group was formed to provide strategic advice on the integration of the curriculum, assessment tool and professional learning resources within the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline*.

Purpose of ABLEWA Validation Trial

Participation in the Validation Trial Schools Group enabled schools to have access to the curriculum and assessment tool, and in return, the participating teachers provided critical advice and feedback to the Authority with regards to –

- validity of curriculum content and the assessment tool
- level and type of teacher support required to support implementation
- ease of use and navigation
- communication strategies required in the long term for use of the curriculum content and assessment tool for a broad audience
- other policy and advice required to support implementation.

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- The *Outline* sets out the curriculum, guiding principles for teaching, learning and assessment and support for teachers in their assessment and reporting of student achievement.

- The Pre-primary to Year 10 Australian Curriculum and ABLES curriculum are embedded in the *Outline.* The ABLEWA curriculum, is not mandated.

- It is referred to as the **Western Australian Curriculum**.

Pre-primary to Year 10: Teaching, Assessing and Reporting Policy

- The Authority's *Pre-primary to Year 10: Teaching, Assessing and Reporting Policy* is supported by the *Policy Standards for Pre-primary to Year 10: Teaching, Assessing and Reporting.*

- The *Policy Standards* provide guidance in relation to:
  – Modified curriculum (section 1.1)
  – Modified reporting (section 2.3).

Modified Curriculum

- For some students, differentiation of the curriculum is required to cater for their individual learning needs.
- If there is a legitimate reason for a student to be following a modified curriculum (for example, gifted and talented students, students with disability and additional learning needs, and students for whom English is an additional language/dialect), schools negotiate any variation to the Western Australian curriculum with the student and her/his parents/carers, and document the decisions made (for example, a documented individual education plan and documented learning plan).
- Schools use discretion in regard to the use of Stages A, B, C and D Western Australian curriculum content (Abilities Based Learning and Education, Western Australia [ABLE*WA*]), detailed in the *Outline*, for planning for teaching students with disability and additional learning needs.
- Schools use discretion in regard to the use of the *EAL/D Progress Map* when planning for teaching and monitoring the progress of students for whom English is an additional language/dialect.

Modified Reporting

- If there is a legitimate reason for a student to be following a modified curriculum (as outlined in section 1.1), in consultation with parents/carers, schools report on a student's progress/achievement in terms of the modified curriculum. For students with disability or for whom English is an additional language/dialect additional reporting on the student's progress/achievement in terms of year-level achievement standards is not required.

- Schools use discretion in regard to the use of the ABLE*WA* assessment tool and the *EAL/D Progress Map* when monitoring and reporting on the progress/achievement of students with disability and additional learning needs and students for whom English is an additional language/dialect.

Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline
ABLE*WA* Resources

www.scsa.wa.edu.au

- Stages A to D Curriculum
- Getting Started with ABLE*WA*
- ABLES Assessment Tool - 1 102 schools across the three Western Australian school sector/systems are registered with the University of Melbourne to use the ABLES Assessment Tool
- Integrating ABLE*WA* into Teaching and Learning
- Online Professional Learning Course
- Key ABLE*WA* Resources

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www.scsa.wa.edu.au

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https://facebook.com/SCSAWA

Integrating ABLE*WA* into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

ABLE*WA* tools, resources and strategies have been incorporated into the teaching and learning cycle to provide teachers with advice and strategies to inform their classroom practice.

ABLE*WA* supports a teacher to:
- assess a student's readiness to learn
- develop appropriate learning goals for four learning areas in consultation with a student support group
- develop an appropriate individual learning plan that can be linked to teaching and learning strategies that have been found to work
- monitor progress to review the impact of the plan on student learning
- better support a student through the teaching and learning cycle (Assess, Data, Plan, Teach).

Assess

The teacher can apply the ABLES assessment tool, in the form of an observational survey that takes approximately 20 minutes to complete for each student, to identify their students' readiness to learn:

- **English: Speaking and Listening** – the development of functional communication skills leading towards recognition and use of the social conventions of communication
- **English: Reading and Writing** – the development of the use and interpretation of symbolic forms of representation leading towards early reading and writing
- **Personal and Social Capability** – the development of skills to support personal/emotional and social/relational dispositions, intelligences, and sensibilities including:

  > Personal and Social Capability, Self Awareness: Self (specifically for students on the autism spectrum) – the development of basic skills related to attention, memory and becoming an independent learner.

The student's progress will guide the teacher to the appropriate curriculum stage and teaching and learning strategies that could be used to develop an individual learning plan.

Data

The ABLES assessments produce four reports:

- **Learning Readiness Report** – summarises the skills and abilities the student is currently developing and those that the student might learn next, which can be linked to relevant curriculums and a set of recommended teaching strategies.
- **Profile Report** – maps a student's level of learning and progress across consecutive assessments, and in all four of the learning pathways as appropriate for the student.
- **Class Report** – provides an opportunity to reflect on the learning of groups of students who are working at the same or adjacent levels on the learning pathways.
- **School Report** - maps individual student's growth in learning at two points in time, two years apart (where data is available).

By reviewing these reports, a teacher can identify where a student is working in relation to the Western Australian Curriculum.

Plan

ABLES assists the student support group (which includes the class teacher and the parent/carer) to set learning goals to be included in a teaching and learning plan.

The outcome of the ABLES assessment tools provides the teacher with achievement advice that assists to identify the most appropriate curriculum and goals for the student that align with the Western Australian Curriculum. While many students with disability can engage with the Western Australian Curriculum provided reasonable adjustments are made, additional curriculum materials may be required for students with a significant intellectual disability.

Stages A to D provide this cohort of students with access to content that supports their progress towards the learning described at the Pre-primary year.

Integrating ABLES into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Plan

The ABLE*WA* Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science, History, Health and Physical Education, Technologies and The Arts is integrated into the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline* as Stages A to D.

Stages A to D focus on progressing students from a pre-intentional to intentional engagement in learning. They support students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around them. As students' progress through these stages, the amount of support decreases as they proceed towards becoming independent learners.

Stages A to D are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress.

Rather the learning descriptions for stages A to D are structured by the following continuum:

Stage A: **Beginning to Explore**	At this level students experience a range of learning activities that will assist them to attend to and explore the world around them with as much independence as possible. Experiences are designed to move students from a pre-intentional level of responding to a level where the response indicates beginning intention. Students need high levels of coactive support and focused attention from the teacher to help them initiate and refine their responses. Students demonstrate some awareness and recognition of familiar people and routine activities.
Stage B: **Active Exploration**	Students at this level become less reliant on high levels of coactive support and become more reliant on verbal prompts and gestures to facilitate their learning. They begin to explore their world independently and engage in simple cause-and-effect play activities. Students are able to focus on structured learning activities for short periods of time. They respond to familiar people and events and begin to use 'yes/no' responses.
Stage C: **Intentional Participation**	Students at this level are less dependent on coactive support and respond more consistently to prompts and simple clear directions from the teacher to support them in their learning. They are displaying the first signs of independence and becoming more peer focused. Students participate in structured learning activities with others and they begin to use pictures, photos and objects to communicate personal interests and experiences. They start to use and link some familiar words and images to construct a meaningful communication.
Stage D: **Building Independence**	With teacher support and curriculum scaffolding, students at this level participate cooperatively in group learning activities. They express their feelings, needs and choices in increasingly appropriate ways and combine and sequence key words and images to communicate personal interests and to recount significant experiences. They indicate beginning understanding of social rules and expectations and are beginning to reflect on their own behaviour.

Integrating ABLES into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Teach

ABLES provides strategies for teaching and learning for students with disability that have been developed through three years of research conducted with teachers of students with additional needs. They represent strategies that experienced teachers draw upon to support the learning of their students. Most important, these strategies have been shown to work and link with existing curriculum used within a school.

ABLES enables teachers to monitor and make adjustments to the content, pedagogy, strategies and resources based on the learning of their students.

Abilities Based Learning Education Western Australia (ABLE*WA*)

Juanita Healy
Executive Director
Curriculum, Assessment and Strategic Policy

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority acknowledges the development of the ABLES Assessment Tool by the University of Melbourne and the Department of Education and Training, Victoria and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority for their development and publication of the ABLES Curriculum and Support Materials.

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- Schools use discretion in regard to the use of the *EAL/D Progress Map* when planning for teaching and monitoring the progress of students for whom English is an additional language/dialect.

Modified Reporting

- If there is a legitimate reason for a student to be following a modified curriculum (as outlined in section 1.1), in consultation with parents/carers, schools report on a student's progress/achievement in terms of the modified curriculum. For students with disability or for whom English is an additional language/dialect additional reporting on the student's progress/achievement in terms of year-level achievement standards is not required.

- Schools use discretion in regard to the use of the ABLE*WA* assessment tool and the *EAL/D Progress Map* when monitoring and reporting on the progress/achievement of students with disability and additional learning needs and students for whom English is an additional language/dialect.

Programs

Inpatient programs service:

- Paediatric Ward- local catchment long stay patients F to 12
- Child Unit- state-wide service. Emergency and Planned. Average 4-6 wks.
- Adolescent Unit- emergency/ crises. Average stay 6-14 days

All programs support home school curriculum where relevant

Outpatient Targeted programs:

- Social Education program (SEP)- Recognition and expression of emotions and development of Resilience. 2 classes One Behaviour other School Disengagement. 2 days a week. F to 6
- Social Skills (SSK)– Relationships and Diversity and Collaboration. ½ Day a week. F to 6
- Linking to Education and Personal development (LEAP)- School refusal and disengagement. 7-9
- Return to Education and Vocation (REV)- School refusal and disengagement. 9 - 12

Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline
ABLE*WA* Resources

www.scsa.wa.edu.au

- Stages A to D Curriculum
- Getting Started with ABLE*WA*
- ABLES Assessment Tool - 1 102 schools across the three Western Australian school sector/systems are registered with the University of Melbourne to use the ABLES Assessment Tool
- Integrating ABLE*WA* into Teaching and Learning
- Online Professional Learning Course
- Key ABLE*WA* Resources

Levels A to D

Focuses on progressing students from a pre-intentional to intentional state.

Encourages students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around.

As students progress through these stages the level of support decreases as they advance towards being an independent learner.

Developed from the SWANS and ABLES research projects

- Level A Beginning to Explore
- Level B Active Exploration
- Level C Intentional Learning
- Level D Building Independence

How do we use the Victorian Curriculum

The teaching and learning program is the school-based plan for delivering this common set of knowledge and skills in ways that best utilise local resources, expertise and contexts. 80% Victorian Curriculum content and 20% local content or student's individual learning plan goals.

Schools have flexibility in the design of their teaching and learning program. Flexibility enables schools to develop particular specialisations, areas of expertise and innovation, while ensuring the mandated curriculum is delivered.

Whole-school curriculum planning involves four interrelated layers:

- By School – a high-level summary of the coverage of all the curriculum areas, reflecting the school's goals, vision and any particular areas of specialisation or innovation
- By Curriculum Area – the sequencing of key knowledge and skills across the years of schooling to support a progression of learning
- By Group/ Year Level – a coherent program from a student perspective that enables effective connections across curriculum areas
- By Unit / Lessons – specifying Victorian Curriculum F–10 content descriptions and achievement standards, activities and resources to ensure students of all achievement levels are able to progress

'Curriculum Area' refers to the learning areas and capabilities

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Integrating ABLE*WA* into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

ABLE*WA* tools, resources and strategies have been incorporated into the teaching and learning cycle to provide teachers with advice and strategies to inform their classroom practice.

ABLE*WA* supports a teacher to:
- assess a student's readiness to learn
- develop appropriate learning goals for four learning areas in consultation with a student support group
- develop an appropriate individual learning plan that can be linked to teaching and learning strategies that have been found to work
- monitor progress to review the impact of the plan on student learning
- better support a student through the teaching and learning cycle (Assess, Data, Plan, Teach).

Assess

The teacher can apply the ABLES assessment tool, in the form of an observational survey that takes approximately 20 minutes to complete for each student, to identify their students' readiness to learn:

- **English: Speaking and Listening** – the development of functional communication skills leading towards recognition and use of the social conventions of communication
- **English: Reading and Writing** – the development of the use and interpretation of symbolic forms of representation leading towards early reading and writing
- **Personal and Social Capability** – the development of skills to support personal/emotional and social/relational dispositions, intelligences, and sensibilities including:

  > Personal and Social Capability, Self Awareness: Self (specifically for students on the autism spectrum) – the development of basic skills related to attention, memory and becoming an independent learner.

The student's progress will guide the teacher to the appropriate curriculum stage and teaching and learning strategies that could be used to develop an individual learning plan.

Data

The ABLES assessments produce four reports:

- **Learning Readiness Report** – summarises the skills and abilities the student is currently developing and those that the student might learn next, which can be linked to relevant curriculums and a set of recommended teaching strategies.
- **Profile Report** – maps a student's level of learning and progress across consecutive assessments, and in all four of the learning pathways as appropriate for the student.
- **Class Report** – provides an opportunity to reflect on the learning of groups of students who are working at the same or adjacent levels on the learning pathways.
- **School Report** - maps individual student's growth in learning at two points in time, two years apart (where data is available).

By reviewing these reports, a teacher can identify where a student is working in relation to the Western Australian Curriculum.

Plan

ABLES assists the student support group (which includes the class teacher and the parent/carer) to set learning goals to be included in a teaching and learning plan.

The outcome of the ABLES assessment tools provides the teacher with achievement advice that assists to identify the most appropriate curriculum and goals for the student that align with the Western Australian Curriculum. While many students with disability can engage with the Western Australian Curriculum provided reasonable adjustments are made, additional curriculum materials may be required for students with a significant intellectual disability.

Stages A to D provide this cohort of students with access to content that supports their progress towards the learning described at the Pre-primary year.

Integrating ABLES into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Plan

The ABLE*WA* Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science, History, Health and Physical Education, Technologies and The Arts is integrated into the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline* as Stages A to D.

Stages A to D focus on progressing students from a pre-intentional to intentional engagement in learning. They support students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around them. As students' progress through these stages, the amount of support decreases as they proceed towards becoming independent learners.

Stages A to D are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress.

Rather the learning descriptions for stages A to D are structured by the following continuum:

Stage A: **Beginning to Explore**	At this level students experience a range of learning activities that will assist them to attend to and explore the world around them with as much independence as possible. Experiences are designed to move students from a pre-intentional level of responding to a level where the response indicates beginning intention. Students need high levels of coactive support and focused attention from the teacher to help them initiate and refine their responses. Students demonstrate some awareness and recognition of familiar people and routine activities.
Stage B: **Active Exploration**	Students at this level become less reliant on high levels of coactive support and become more reliant on verbal prompts and gestures to facilitate their learning. They begin to explore their world independently and engage in simple cause-and-effect play activities. Students are able to focus on structured learning activities for short periods of time. They respond to familiar people and events and begin to use 'yes/no' responses.
Stage C: **Intentional Participation**	Students at this level are less dependent on coactive support and respond more consistently to prompts and simple clear directions from the teacher to support them in their learning. They are displaying the first signs of independence and becoming more peer focused. Students participate in structured learning activities with others and they begin to use pictures, photos and objects to communicate personal interests and experiences. They start to use and link some familiar words and images to construct a meaningful communication.
Stage D: **Building Independence**	With teacher support and curriculum scaffolding, students at this level participate cooperatively in group learning activities. They express their feelings, needs and choices in increasingly appropriate ways and combine and sequence key words and images to communicate personal interests and to recount significant experiences. They indicate beginning understanding of social rules and expectations and are beginning to reflect on their own behaviour.

Integrating ABLES into the Teaching and Learning Cycle

Teach

ABLES provides strategies for teaching and learning for students with disability that have been developed through three years of research conducted with teachers of students with additional needs. They represent strategies that experienced teachers draw upon to support the learning of their students. Most important, these strategies have been shown to work and link with existing curriculum used within a school.

ABLES enables teachers to monitor and make adjustments to the content, pedagogy, strategies and resources based on the learning of their students.

Challenges

- Balance between Year Level Content and student ability level
- Age/interest and ability
- Student learning goals and priorities and the curriculum
- Complexity and diversity of student cohort
- Funding
- NDIS
- How can we better enhance our programs and units of work
- Establishing a curriculum coordinators network across specialists schools
- Supporting students and families across a large catchment area
- Ensuring programs target the needs of the student cohort attending
- Layers of complexity

Celebrations

- Inclusivity of the Victorian Curriculum.
- Having A to D as part of Foundation so teachers can identify and track the learning of students
- Special schools are no longer silos working in isolation but part of the state curriculum
- The curriculum has given us common ground so special can better work together.
- We have shared language and assessment system (ABLES)
- Goal banks and the fantastic resources specialists schools and staff have created
- Special Schools as centres of expertise

Considerations for the Future

- How to continue to build our own capacity
- How do we better support our mainstream colleagues
- How can we work together to create better programs and opportunities for our students

ASEPA

**AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL
EDUCATION PRINCIPALS'
ASSOCIATION**