Inclusive School Practices Toolkit

Q&A: Making Curriculum Adjustments

This tool has been developed as part of the *Inclusive School Communities Project*, funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency. The project is led by JFA Purple Orange.

Introduction

The Inclusive School Communities Project hosted eight webinars in May and June 2020 on various topics including learning-at-home, curriculum adjustments, data-informed decision making, data collection methods, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and inclusive school practices. This included the 90-minute webinar titled ‘Making Supplementary, Substantial and Extensive Curriculum Adjustments’ presented by Loren Swancutt, which was delivered two times to different groups of participants (13 May & 11 June 2020). This tool was written by Loren Swancutt following the webinars and provides brief responses to a selection of questions raised by participants. You are encouraged to visit the Inclusive School Communities website and watch the webinar recording that expands on the content in this tool <https://inclusiveschoolcommunities.org.au/resources/webinars>.

To comply with the Disability Standards for Education (DSE), educators must implement reasonable adjustments so that all students have the opportunity to become active and engaged learners. For some, these adjustments apply to the way in which they access and participate in curriculum. This presentation focused on unpacking processes that ensure all students can continue to engage with their age-equivalent curriculum within the general education classroom, including those who require supplementary, substantial or extensive curriculum adjustments.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

1. **What defines supplementary, substantial and extensive curriculum adjustments?**

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) defines the levels of adjustment in the following ways:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Support provided with quality differentiated teaching practice** | **Supplementary adjustments** | **Substantial adjustments** | **Extensive adjustments** |
| Students with disability are supported through active monitoring and adjustments that are not greater than those used to meet the needs of diverse learners. These adjustments are provided through usual school processes, without drawing on additional resources, and by meeting proficient-level Teaching Standards (AITSL).  Adjustments are made infrequently as occasional action, or frequently as low-level action such as monitoring. | Students with disability are provided with adjustments that are supplementary to the strategies and resources already available for all students within the school.  Adjustments occur for particular activities at specific times throughout the week. | Students with disability who have more substantial support needs are provided with essential adjustments and considerable adult assistance.  Adjustments to the usual educational program occur at most times on most days. | Students with disability and very high support needs are provided with extensive targeted measures and sustained levels of intensive support. These adjustments are highly individualised, comprehensive and ongoing.  Adjustments to the regular educational program occur at all times. |

Sourced from <https://www.nccd.edu.au/sites/default/files/h5p/content/167/docs/endorsed_levels_of_adjustment.pdf>

In relation to curriculum specifically, the levels of adjustment would result in the following actions:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Support provided with quality differentiated teaching practice** | **Supplementary adjustments** | **Substantial adjustments** | **Extensive adjustments** |
| Responsive adaptations that is infrequent and occasional, or frequent with low-level action. | Adjustments are made to particular tasks/activities at specific times, or frequently with mid-level action.  This includes variations to the ways in which the student engages with curriculum content. E.g., Personalised changes to the context, providing multimodal interactions, literacy and communication scaffolds, varying the ways the student is able to demonstrate and express learning. | Adjustments that occur at most times on most days with high-level action.  This includes significant variation to the complexity of the curriculum, with the student being provided an alternate access point across learning areas (different grade level of curriculum than their same-aged peers). | Adjustments that occur all of the time with high-level action.  This includes accessing highly individualised curriculum goals that are enacted across all learning areas. |

Checklists that are designed to assist schools in differentiating between the levels of adjustment can be found here: <https://www.nccd.edu.au/tools/guide-choosing-level-adjustment>

1. **What processes can be used to determine the need for a student to access substantial or extensive curriculum adjustments?**

A rigorous, evidence-driven process should be utilised when deciding when to provide substantial or extensive curriculum adjustments. The process should engage ongoing consultation with the student and their parents/carers, and engage a multidisciplinary team. The collaboration should centre on identifying the impacts and barriers experienced by the student, and working to overcome these through the provision of universal design principles and implementation of responsive differentiation and supplementary adjustments. Support should be provided to the teacher to plan for and enact the required differentiation and supplementary adjustments with frequency and fidelity. This will often involve co-planning and/or co-teaching with members of the multidisciplinary team. Data relating to the student’s engagement with the strategies and their progression in learning should be monitored and reviewed regularly, allowing responsive adaptations to occur if necessary. If across time the student is still unable to access the rigour and complexity of their age-equivalent curriculum across an entire learning area, even when high-quality teaching is taking place, then the provision of an alternate curriculum access point or individualised learning goals may be explored.

1. **How are curriculum adjustments enacted in Senior Schooling (Years 11 and 12)?**

Curriculum authorities in each state provide the guidelines around the provision of adjustments in Senior Schooling. These provisions typically apply at the point of summative assessment. Although there may be stringent protocols around the types of adjustments permitted during summative assessment, flexibility exists in relation to classroom teaching and learning. During lesson delivery, teachers are able to apply a range of instructional strategies and adjustments that are responsive to student diversity. Teachers can differentiate and scaffold the ways in which students access and participate in instruction, and how they engage with the knowledge and skills demanded by the curriculum. Contact your state curriculum authority for more information.

1. **How do the levels of adjustment align with the concept of Response to Intervention (RTI)?**

RTI is a multi-tier approach to early identification of support for all students. When a student is not making progress in a particular skill, interventions are enacted. The RTI process begins with Tier 1, which encompasses high-quality instruction and universal screening. Data is used to determine students who require interventions that increase in levels of intensity across Tiers 2 and 3. These interventions are aimed at remediating deficit skills and accelerating learning. Progress is monitored closely, with decisions about intensity and duration of intervention being data-driven.

The levels of adjustment relating to the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) have both similarities and differences to the RTI model.

Similarities:

* Actions/responses increase in intensity and frequency
* Grounded in the provision of high-quality, differentiated instruction occurring for all students
* Provide responses that increase student access and participation in curriculum

Differences:

* The NCCD levels are in relation to adjustments, and not tiers of intervention
* The NCCD levels are about identifying the types, intensity and frequency of adjustments that are provided to students with disability
* The NCCD levels of adjustment are linked to the legislative requirements of the Disability Standards for Education (DSE), and are specific to students living with disability

1. **Does the application of adjustments using the Australian Curriculum align/transfer with the curriculums used in Victoria and New South Wales?**

Yes, all three forms of curriculum are standards-based. This means that they are designed and organised in similar ways, and therefore can be adapted and used in similar ways.

The alignment of the different terminology used across the three curriculums is as follows:

Australian Curriculum = Achievement Standards

NSW Curriculum = Stage Statements

Victorian Curriculum = Level Descriptions

Australian Curriculum = Content Descriptions

NSW Curriculum = Outcomes

Victorian Curriculum = Level Content Descriptions

More Information

**Inclusive Education for the 21st Century** provides a rigorous overview of the foundational principles of inclusive education, and the barriers to access and participation. It explores evidence-based strategies that support diverse learners, including specific changes in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices, and the use of data. Loren is the author of Chapter 9 Making adjustments to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. https://www.booktopia.com.au/inclusive-education-for-the-21st-century-linda-graham/ebook/9781760873448.html

**School Inclusion – From Theory to Practice** is a website created by Loren to share and unpack school-level design, implementation and leadership processes that support the realisation of inclusive education in Australian schools and school systems. https://school-inclusion.com/

**School Inclusion Network for Educators** is an initiative of All Means All, a nationwide multi-stakeholder alliance for Inclusive Education. SINE is a national network for education professionals seeking to ensure that they support diverse learners in their classrooms and schools. SINE has a closed, Facebook group with supporting resources available via the All Means All website. https://allmeansall.org.au/sine-school-inclusion-network-educators/

The **Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE)** is an initiative bringing together organisations that share a commitment to advance Inclusive Education in Australia and across State and Territory education systems including government and non-government schools. https://acie.org.au/

Acknowledgement

This tool was written by Loren Swancutt, National Convenor of School Inclusion Network for Educators (SINE) and founder of School Inclusion - From Theory to Practice. Loren is a substantive Head of Inclusive Schooling at a government high school in North Queensland. She has 11 years of teaching experience across both primary and secondary settings. Loren is a doctoral candidate at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Visit Loren's website for more information <http://school-inclusion.com/>

