

# GOOD TEACHING

Differentiated Classroom Practice  
Learning for All



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# DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM PRACTICE LEARNING FOR ALL

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# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

## Supporting professional learning

Our Learners First Strategy aims to develop successful, skilled and innovative Tasmanians. Its values include learning and excellence so that Tasmanians are engaged in positive, productive and supported learning experiences, and have high expectations and a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence.

This resource has been developed specifically for teachers participating in Professional Learning Institute programs but also more generally as a practical support resource for all teachers. In addition it is designed to inform the work of school leaders as they implement school improvement plans and support quality teaching practices.

It is one part of a suite of resources that includes:



- **Good Teaching: A Guide for Staff Discussion**
- **Good Teaching: Differentiated Classroom Practice – Learning for All**
- **Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning – Planning for Learning**
- **Good Teaching: Quality Assessment Practices – Guiding Learning**
- **The accompanying videos**

It should also be used in conjunction with:

**Supporting Literacy and Numeracy Success** which provides teachers with strategies for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes as they plan using curriculum documents.

**Respectful Schools Respectful Behaviour** which highlights the importance of providing safe and supportive environments as a vital part of quality teaching and learning.

Practical examples are provided using the following identifiers:



Template



Good Practice



Video



Tool

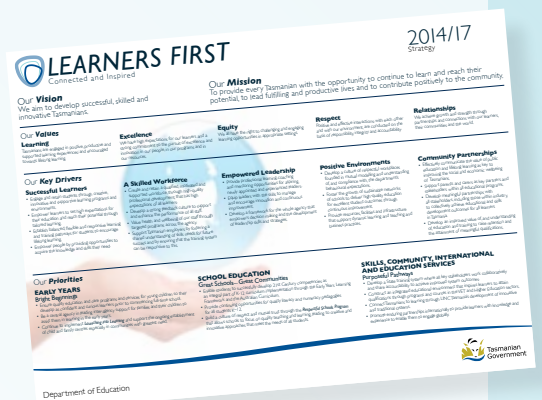
## Supporting school improvement and quality teaching

The Department of Education's Learners First Strategy outlines the department's Key Drivers and Priorities including a clear focus on quality teaching and learning as it works to build great schools.

This resource supports schools as they engage with the National School Improvement Tool.

While the resource is a useful standalone document for teachers, its messages will be more powerful if it is incorporated into whole school planning practices. For example, principals may use it as the basis for Performance and Development Plan (PDP) conversations. It has been written to support the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Tasmania (Department of Education 2013) and links to these standards are included.

Video resources are being developed to accompany the print resources and will increasingly incorporate examples of teacher practice. The latest version of this resource is available online at: <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/intranet/Pages/home.aspx>



## Note to school leaders

Differentiated teaching and learning is referred to in Domain 7 of the *National School Improvement Tool* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace 2013).

- Domain 7 – Differentiated teaching and learning

In their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers make educational adjustments to take account of students' levels of readiness, and their strengths, needs and interests.

Further details can be found by viewing the *National School Improvement Tool* at: <http://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/improvementtoolv2.pdf>

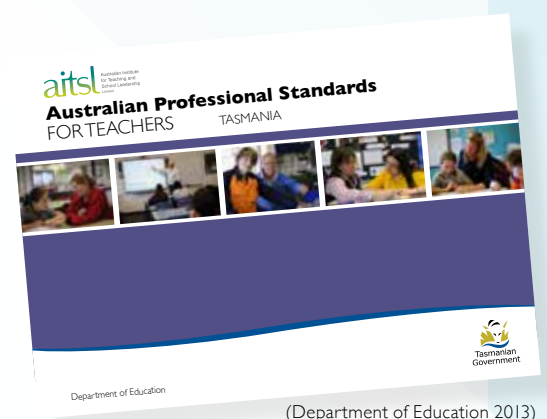
## Professional standards for teachers

*The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Tasmania* outline the importance of differentiation in Standard 1 – Know students and how they learn.

When working towards this standard teachers could:

- Document the identified needs of individual students.
- Note adjustments that they will make to meet the needs of particular students in unit and lesson plans.

There are many valuable resources to support teachers in understanding and using the professional standards on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) website: <http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/>



## Planning for differentiation

Our **Learners First Strategy** aims to provide *bright beginnings* and to build *great schools* and *great communities*. Our department is committed to *building a culture of respect and mutual trust and a focus on quality teaching and learning, leading to creative and innovative approaches that meet the needs of all students*. (Learners First 2014/17)  
*There is an expectation that schools will build the capacity of all teachers to make appropriate educational adjustments for students.* (School Support and Expectations 2014)

It is recognised that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs if they are to be optimally engaged and challenged. The process of making those adjustments is known as the *differentiation* of classroom learning. Differentiation is what's expected of good teachers. The focus of this resource is to describe what is meant by differentiation and to provide practical strategies and tools that can be used to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences for all students.

## The curriculum and differentiation

For differentiation to be successful, appropriate strategies must be implemented at both the school and classroom levels. Differentiation is more likely to happen where the school leadership emphasises student diversity as part of educational provision and as integral to both the curriculum and pedagogy. Differentiation is evident at the classroom level when teachers monitor students' progress closely and tailor learning tasks to their levels of readiness, interest and need.

The curriculum, teaching strategies and evidence of learning can be adapted to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities within a stimulating learning environment. Through differentiation a planned, documented and challenging curriculum can be provided that caters for diverse students that maximises student learning.

*"All students deserve equitable access to an engaging and rigorous curriculum."*  
(Tomlinson and Javuis 2012)



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DIFFERENTIATION?

## Our Values

*Learning: Tasmanians are engaged in positive, productive and supported learning experiences; and encouraged towards lifelong learning. (Learners First 2014/17)*

## Key message

“Supporting all learners is the most fundamental action for teachers in Tasmania.” (*Supporting Good Teaching – A Guide for Staff Discussion*)

Differentiation means:

- Knowing each student's background, learning needs, strengths and interests.
- Choosing strategies and resources that make use of each student's strengths and interests to address their learning needs.
- Knowing where students are up to in their learning.
- Planning personalised learning experiences that help students to move on in their understanding.
- Creating opportunities for on-going, timely feedback that focuses on learning goals.
- Being flexible in how teaching and learning happens.
- Providing students with choices.

Differentiation is not about individualising learning or providing a different learning experience for every student. It is about making adjustments that personalise learning to reflect the needs, strengths and interests of students.

A key principle underpinning this pedagogy is that of knowing students well enough to use their strengths and interests to address their needs.

Differentiation is an ongoing professional journey for teachers that develops through explicit focus, feedback and support. There are strategies that school leaders can use to support this journey.

## Explanation

Differentiated classroom learning happens when a teacher understands that classes are made up of individuals and that effective teaching is personalised according to the various needs of students. Effective teachers plan ways to respond to the needs and interests of their students.

They are aware that students bring to their learning experiences a range of:

- life experiences
- understandings and prior knowledge
- socio-economic or cultural backgrounds
- abilities and preferred modes of learning.

These can influence each student's:

- readiness to learn
- rate of learning
- ability to attend to learning
- level of proficiency with the English language
- preferred way of learning efficiently
- way of demonstrating their learning effectively
- interests and aspirations.

Teachers who differentiate use tools and strategies to:

- get to know their students
- conduct pre-assessment (both formal and informal) to find out where students are up to in their learning
- allow students some choice in aspects of their learning
- create learning experiences that build on each student's strengths
- enrich learning experiences through student diversity

- create opportunities for on-going, timely feedback focused on the goals for learning
- develop each student's independence and ownership of their learning.

A differentiated classroom is a flexible and dynamic context for learning. The mode of teaching will be varied to provide the most effective learning for students. Sometimes it will involve the whole class and sometimes small groups or individual students. Student grouping will be flexible, depending on the goal for learning.

Differentiation strategies can be applied to any or all aspects of learning:

- **Content** (what is to be taught) is described in curriculum frameworks, such as the *Australian Curriculum*. It can be differentiated through the resources and materials used to explore the content.
- **Process** (how learning will occur) can be differentiated through the teaching strategies and learning tasks used to engage students. Differentiated learning tasks have multiple entry and exit points that both enable and extend learning.
- **Product** (evidence of student learning) can be differentiated by providing students with choice in how they demonstrate their learning. The aim is to give the most accurate evidence of student progress towards learning goals.
- **Environment** (where learning takes place) can be differentiated by considering how the physical, social, aesthetic and organisational aspects of the classroom can contribute positively to student learning.

*“Teaching targeted at the middle of a class can fail to challenge and extend higher achieving students and fail to engage and thus de-motivate, lower achieving students” (Masters 2011)*

Teaching may be direct and explicit, or inductive and immersive.

Groups may be based on like-interest, like-readiness level, pace, or preferred mode of learning.

Sometimes students will choose who they work with.

Learning may be collaborative or individual, guided inquiry or project-based.

Learning may be face-to-face, online, or a combination of both.

### A curriculum for all

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians articulates nationally consistent future directions and aspirations for Australian schooling agreed by all Australian Education Ministers.

The Melbourne Declaration has two overarching goals for schooling in Australia:

**Goal 1**  
Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

**Goal 2**  
All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens

*(Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians)*





## Practical examples



### Knowing your students – a secondary physical education class

(Video 5m 40s)

After identifying the gender balance and students' prior knowledge, the physical education teacher in this video ascertains individual student's strengths and weaknesses before teaching her classes. She tailors the curriculum to suit student needs. She uses a range of styles to give instructions to students including verbal and visual demonstrations. The teacher ensures students achieve a level of success by differentiating tasks and by providing individual feedback throughout the lesson. She extends students with leadership roles and encourages them to take their learning into the community.

Source: AITSL Illustrations of practice <http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/illustrations/Details/IOP00053>



### Personalising learning for EAL/D students - Year 3 English

(Video 5m 19s)

In this video, the teacher plans from Year 3 *Australian Curriculum: English* content to explore descriptive language and develop students' language proficiency to create narrative texts. She draws on material in the EAL/D teacher resource to personalise the learning of her students. She uses the [EAL/D Learning Progression](#) to identify and monitor the students' language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing. She uses the [English EAL/D Annotated content descriptions: English](#) to obtain information about linguistic or cultural considerations implicit in the curriculum content descriptions. She also draws on suggested teaching strategies in that publication.

Source: Based on Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) materials; Illustrations of personalised learning: <http://www.acara.edu.au/illustrations/IOP00013/>



### Examples of adjustments that differentiate

(Video: 12m)

In this video, a first year senior science teacher just learning about differentiation asks "... how do you challenge your top students, without leaving anybody behind?" She gets some ideas on how to get started with 'tiering' lessons and grouping strategies from an expert teacher very experienced in differentiating. It is acknowledged that not everything can be differentiated all the time; it is a learned skill that develops over time with consistent focus and feedback.

Source: Teaching Channel (US) <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/differentiating-instruction>





## Some key indicators of differentiated classroom learning

- A variety of instructional strategies are used by teachers
- A range of tasks are planned to engage students
- Resources cater to a range of reading levels and modes
- Formative assessment data is gathered about student learning
- Tasks are adjusted to meet student needs
- Technology is being used to provide different learning experiences for some students
- Grouping of students is purposeful and planned
- Tasks at extended levels of challenge or complexity engage students
- Routines are in place to maximise on-task learning time
- Programs are developed to meet the needs of all students
- Choices in content and how they demonstrate learning are offered to students
- Physical setup of the classroom supports different activities happening simultaneously

(Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006)

## Questions for reflection

1. In what ways am I currently differentiating classroom learning for my students?
2. What aspect of learning do I feel most comfortable differentiating? What could I do next?
3. What steps could I take to increase my effectiveness in differentiating learning for my students?
4. Who among my colleagues differentiates most effectively? What are some ways I might learn from them?
5. What strategies and processes at a school level would support me in further developing differentiated learning in my classroom?



# KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

## Our Values

*Excellence: We have high expectations for our learners, and a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence and innovation in our people, in our programs and in our resources.* (Learners First 2014/17)

## Key message

Learning is a social, collaborative undertaking that happens in a classroom community. Developing positive and respectful relationships forms the basis for building strong classroom communities. An integral part of building these relationships lies in getting to know the backgrounds, talents, needs and aspirations of your students.

This can include an undertaking to:

- Find out students' strengths, what they are passionate about and their goals.
- Know about students' cultural and language background.
- Know about social disadvantage or trauma that may be part of students' background.
- Understand students' needs; including medical, personal, physical, communication, sensory and learning needs.
- Create opportunities for students to get to know one another and appreciate the diverse qualities they bring to the classroom.
- Model and teach about wellbeing, mutual support and respectful interactions.
- Find out where students are up to in their learning with respect to the curriculum.

Know who can be consulted to build knowledge of students.

Build partnerships for the benefit of the students.

Work collaboratively with:

- parents
- support staff
- specialists.

## Explanation

Teachers who know their students develop insight into how their social, emotional and intellectual capabilities may affect their learning. By knowing their students well, teachers are able to craft learning tasks that tap into their interests, meet their needs and provide appropriate levels of challenge.

If teachers have knowledge of a student's background experiences they are able to make learning points clearer and more relevant. For example, in a high school English class the teacher may relate a student's interest in social media to how language can be used in this medium to create positive and negative personal and social identities.

By making time to get to know students and their families, teachers are able to develop a sense of the cultural background of the learners in their class. This knowledge can be used to build understanding and acceptance of one another's perspective and experiences. Through this process a teacher can create a community of learners who value difference, embrace diversity and promote the growth of positive relationships. The result is a mutually supportive classroom community.

Having high expectations of students and their abilities encourages them to feel:

- positively connected to others
- respected
- that their work is meaningful
- that they are good at what they do.

Where teachers work with a large number of different students every day, even learning their names can be challenging. The time and effort invested in this will pay a worthwhile dividend in terms of each student's connection with school.

Schools have access to a range of people with specialist expertise that classroom teachers can consult to build a comprehensive picture of their students and develop shared understandings to provide optimal support for students.

Teachers and specialists may need to be creative when seeking sources of expertise, resources and opportunities both from within and outside the school community.

Develop a classroom culture that:

- makes it safe to take risks
- values learning through mistakes
- promotes effort and persistence
- helps to develop self-motivated learners.

### Specialist Support

Every school has a school support teacher to help build capacity of school staff. These teachers work collaboratively with classroom teachers, teacher assistants and other relevant support providers to plan for student learning using differentiated classroom practice.

In addition, our Department provides a range of specialist support personnel with a wide range of expertise. Professional support staff such as school psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists and EAL/D teachers is available to work with students and support teachers. Specialist support is also available for students who have vision or hearing impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder or physical impairment.

Teachers who require additional support should work through their principal and school leadership teams. They will advise about the correct protocols and access professional support as required through the Manager State Support Service or the relevant Learning Service Manager School Support.



People with specialist expertise that can be consulted include:

- SUPPORT TEACHERS
- EAL/D TEACHERS
- LITERACY/NUMERACY SPECIALISTS
- TEACHERS WITH EXPERTISE IN GIFTED EDUCATION
- PATHWAY PLANNERS
- YOUTH LEARNING OFFICERS
- SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS
- AUTISM CONSULTANTS
- SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
- SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS
- SCHOOL CHAPLAINS

## Knowing where students are up to in their learning

As well as knowing who their students are as learners, it is important that teachers know where they are up to in their learning. This allows learning experiences to be planned so that they are challenging, without being so difficult that students feel overwhelmed.

The first step in planning for learning is to have an understanding of the curriculum scope and sequence for the learning area and the expected learning outcomes.

Some students may be at a different developmental stage than their peers and working with curriculum based capabilities to achieve their individual learning goals. Within the *Australian Curriculum*, the levels described in the continuum for each of the general capabilities provide a mechanism for locating where students are up to in their learning. For example, a student with disability may be working at Level 1a in their numeracy skills, while a very capable Year 5 student could apply critical and creative thinking at Level 5 to their work in science.

This provides the starting point for backward planning a program of learning. This process is outlined in more detail in *Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning* and *Good Teaching: Quality Assessment Practices*.

When designing a program of work it is important that teachers find out what students already know, understand and can do, as well as uncovering any misconceptions they have developed. This will involve using the formative assessment strategies and tools that are outlined in the formative assessment section of *Good Teaching: Quality Assessment Practices*.

Many teachers will feel the urge to aim for the middle when designing learning tasks. In this way they hope to reach the largest number of students in any given lesson or learning sequence. Research has shown that this approach is ineffective. It ignores the needs of advanced students and can leave them unchallenged and feeling bored. Equally it can confuse students who find the task too difficult and can lead to their disengagement from classroom learning. A differentiated classroom learning program where teachers design tasks based on their knowledge of their students will cater to the learning needs of all.



Two key assessment tools to inform planning are the **NAPLAN Toolkit** and **Improve** an online formative assessment tool.

**Literacy and Numeracy teaching is everyone's business. NAPLAN is an agreed national measure of student outcomes.**

**Tips and avoiding the traps**

- NAPLAN is a national assessment, and all students demonstrate their actual skills and knowledge.
- NAPLAN provides valuable information about Curriculum.
- The information delivered through the NAPLAN at whole school, class and individual student level.
- Everything principals need to know about NAPLAN is contained in the 2014 Handbook for Principals.

**TIPS**

- Quality assessment should be planned that are based on the information that students have available to them.
- Common areas of the Australian Curriculum
- Grammar**
  - Correctly identify and use parts of speech including noun, verb and creating facts.
- Punctuation**
  - Correctly identify and use sentence boundary punctuation and capital letters when writing simple sentences.
- Spelling**
  - Identify words with phonetic elements not covered in the English, French and Dialects.
- Writing**
  - Focus on student writing a variety of text types to support content knowledge, participation and writing.
  - Use clearly constructed simple, compound and complex sentences.
  - Use a variety of sentence structures to support content knowledge and writing.
- Numeracy**
  - Focus on teaching:
    - number operations with basic operations (+, -, ×, ÷) and fractions.
    - number knowledge of mathematical terminology.

**Literacy and Numeracy teaching is everyone's business. NAPLAN is an agreed national measure of student outcomes.**

**Resource Inventory**

**Reassessment**

NAPLAN Toolkit User Guide February 2014

Guide to Student and School Reports

This Table needs resources (2) is based on [http://www.naplan.gov.au/naplan/naplan-toolkit/](#)

Key focus areas reported from item analysis

Using the NAPLAN Toolkit to identify student needs

Analysis of Spelling items June 2013 to 2014

Best practice checklist: Student and School Reports

Tip and avoiding the traps

Your Guide to NAPLAN 2014

**Literacy and Numeracy teaching is everyone's business. NAPLAN is an agreed national measure of student outcomes.**

**Your Guide to NAPLAN 2014**

**Literacy**

- Writing and spelling are two areas where particular focus is required in Victorian schools, although not to the exclusion of other areas of focus.
- One of the best resources for supporting the teaching of writing is that of the NAPLAN writing centre, and the NAPLAN persuasive and narrative writing guides. Check the NAPLAN writing centre for more persuasive writing resources for the 2014 school year. The NAPLAN writing centre also provides a range of writing and spelling resources for each year level. Using this guide to guide areas of focus in explicitly teaching writing is very powerful.
- Quality is essential and that of quality depends on planning and preparation. One quality is a combination of writing and reading, it is important that quality is taught explicitly and is linked. Teachers should focus on developing communication, critical and creative thinking, and writing and oral presentation skills.
- To support students in Reading at least 10 percent of each student's class should be read to. Read alouds of text should be supported by students in building their background knowledge and vocabulary in order to engage with a wider range of texts.

**Numeracy**

- Effective teaching of the Australian Curriculum Mathematics with a particular focus on the mathematical proficiency is a crucial preparation for NAPLAN. Students benefit from opportunities to engage in problem solving involving reasoning and strategy development. When working with students on these questions, students benefit from resources to engage with in addressing some common and underlying the use of structure in the questions.
- The important ideas of factors, decimals and percentage are areas where particular focus is required in Victorian schools. The Australian Curriculum uses real-world contexts to support learning in preparing for student learning. There are many areas and there are many valuable resources available through the NAPLAN writing centre.

**Other resources available to support teachers in preparing students to do their best in NAPLAN.**

- [http://www.naplan.gov.au/naplan/naplan-toolkit/](#)
- [http://www.naplan.gov.au/naplan/naplan-toolkit/](#)
- [http://www.naplan.gov.au/naplan/naplan-toolkit/](#)

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**improve**



## How can I learn more about my students' starting points, interests and best ways of learning?

Early in the year students need to know that their teacher is also a learner who diligently studies two things – the content he or she teaches and the students themselves. This message needs to be clear from the first day of school and evident every day that follows. At some point in the early conversations about creating a classroom that supports each student's success, it is important for students to hear the following:

1. I want to know you as a person because you are interesting to me.
2. I need to know you as a student so that I can determine your next steps in learning.
3. I will watch you as you work in class as closely as I can because what I learn will help me plan better for you individually and for the class as a whole.
4. You'll see me take notes while you work and while we discuss things in class. This helps me learn more about how learning works for you.
5. In the first few days of school, I'll ask you to do some things that will give me a reasonable sense of your starting points this year and of who you are as a learner.
6. Throughout the year, I'll often ask you to share what you are learning so I can help you take your next step as a learner.
7. Sometimes, your work will be marked and given a rating, but I will be more interested in giving you information that will help you learn better and increase your chances of success.
8. I'll often invite you to tell me how you're feeling about your work and what is going well or poorly for you in class. I hope you'll always feel free to honestly tell me those things. Even if I forget to ask.

(Tomlinson & Imbeau 2010, p. 60)

Read and reflect on your school and class context. How do these prompts work in your context?

## Practical examples



### Example of getting to know students and their community

A high school has a large proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Many of the parents harbour negative sentiments about school life generally. There are significant non-attendance and engagement issues amongst students.

Many families, however, are well connected with the neighbourhood centre which offers services and support programs to the local community. Improving the school-home partnership has been identified as a key link to improving community perceptions about education and student attendance.

With that in mind, the school leadership team has set about working more closely with the neighbourhood centre and has started offering some learning programs from the centre. The results have been pleasing with the neighbourhood centre welcoming the stronger connections, the sharing of resources, and the flexibility of the school to meet community needs.



### Example of developing shared student knowledge to inform planning

A Year 10 student with cerebral palsy and significant learning issues has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that their team of teachers review and modify at the end of each term. The student is transitioning to a local senior secondary school and their current teachers have started planning the move from early Term 2. They have met with the student and their parents to discuss long-term goals and how their course choices may look. At these meetings the student talks excitedly about their interests and hobbies out of school, and what they would like to achieve post-school.

All of this information provides their current teachers with further insight into how to best plan for the student and the follow-up discussions they will have in subsequent weeks with the senior secondary school support teacher.



### Example of how parent knowledge can be used to enhance the learning program

An identified gifted student succeeds quite well academically, but their teacher has difficulty motivating them to engage with learning. During a conversation with the student's mother at the first parent/teacher interview for the year, it was revealed that their true passion was in the performing arts.

The teacher was able to incorporate this knowledge into the English learning program through work on performance poetry and radio drama. They also arranged for the student to participate in a drama class and work towards a key role in the school production. This class is normally only available to older students in the school.



### Example of cultural background informing classroom practice

(Video 4m)

In this video, a teacher at St Paul's Campus, on Moa Island in the Torres Strait, integrates local language into a lesson on adjectives with the support of a community Elder. In a composite class of students from Years 4 to 7, the teacher reflects on the importance of understanding the individual needs of students in order to ensure they achieve success in their learning. He describes how he has used differentiated teaching to support English literacy development through rotational group work based on ability levels. He has used the community Elder to explain and gain parental and community support for this differentiated teaching program.

Source: AITSL Illustrations of practice  
<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/illustrations/ViewIOP/IOP00298/index.html>



### Example of student voice in learning (Video 5m 31s)

This video contains interviews with secondary students. These students describe why it is important to them that their teachers know them as learners and how it helps them to learn.

Source: ASCD Educational Leadership Online (USA)

[http://video.ascd.org/services/player/bcpid47884069001?bckey=AQ~~,AAAAAmGjiRE~,e\\_scbD3Me8-wNwVrrLtPIhZjzLSzWzxGI&bctid=60305095001](http://video.ascd.org/services/player/bcpid47884069001?bckey=AQ~~,AAAAAmGjiRE~,e_scbD3Me8-wNwVrrLtPIhZjzLSzWzxGI&bctid=60305095001)



### Example of getting to know a student's passions, strengths and needs

A student is starting Year 11 at their local senior secondary school and the pastoral care teacher provides a number of 'getting to know you' activities on the first day. The teacher also explains to the group that their role is to support their success in subjects, their attendance and any issues they have settling in.

The teacher also makes a call to the student's family to make initial contact and explain their support role. The student's mother discusses some previous challenges with some of their high school peers. The mother reveals that her child is looking forward to being able to socialise with a larger peer group and pursuing their passions at college through the subjects they have chosen.

The teacher shares relevant information with some of the student's other teachers and continues to support and monitor their transition to all aspects of senior secondary school life with richer insights into their previous challenges and their passion for music.

## Questions for reflection:

1. What information can I source from the Student Support System (SSS) that informs my understanding of my students; e.g. existing learning plans, curriculum assessment reports, attendance data, specialist reports, communication with parents and wellbeing data?
2. What are some creative ways I can use existing school processes to know my students better; e.g. grade camp, first day activities?
3. How can I make time and create opportunities to get to know my students?
4. Which specialists may have relevant background information about my students?
5. In what ways can I communicate positively and effectively with each student's family?
6. What are my students' current interests and how can I tap into them?
7. What are the priority individual's and group's needs?
8. What are the dominant attitudes and dispositions that significantly impact on each student's engagement or attention? How might these be improved?
9. In what activities do the students achieve success?
10. What information can we gather from listening to student questions and watching their actions in class?



# DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES FOR PERSONALISING LEARNING

## Our Values

*Equity: We all have the right to challenging and engaging learning opportunities in appropriate settings.* (Learners First 2014/17)

## Key message

Differentiated classroom learning recognises that some students require significant personalisation of their learning programs to be fully engaged and challenged.

Some students will require adjustments that extend and enrich their learning. Some will require considerable support and others may require targeted support or systematic teaching to overcome barriers such as learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) to enable their engagement, learning and achievement.

## Explanation

Differentiation of classroom learning is achieved by making adjustments to personalise aspects of learning that meet the particular needs of students. While there are some common features found in differentiated classrooms, the detail will vary.

Adjustments need to be considered and included at the whole class level when planning units of work and in more detail at the lesson planning level. For example, adjustment considerations at the unit level may include planning for readiness or interest-based groups of students. At the lesson level it may include taking into consideration a student's progress towards learning goals in a previous lesson.

Adjustments include any measure or action to promote access, and engagement, and to optimise student learning outcomes.

Adjustments and/or extensions vary according to the needs of the students. They may be minor or significant. In some instances, such as students with disability, they may be designed and developed as part of a collaborative planning meeting.

Adjustments can be made to:

- **content** (what is to be taught)
- **process** (how learning will occur)
- **product** (evidence of student learning).

The **learning environment** can also contribute to differentiation in significant ways.

Adjustments may be made to one of these aspects of learning, or to any combination that makes sense in the context. Not every aspect of every lesson will be differentiated. Ideally it is targeted to have the most significant impact on a student's learning.

A teacher's skill in differentiating develops with:

- Experience in applying a broad repertoire of teaching strategies in flexible ways.
- Access to a range of resources for learning.
- Capacity to manage a classroom with diverse learning activities happening simultaneously.

The templates on the next two pages may be used to assist with planning. For further details refer to *Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning*.



## Unit planning template using a backward design planning process

	Learning Area:	Year Level:
<b>Consult curriculum</b>	Focus:	
	Curriculum Achievement Standard:	
	Curriculum Content Descriptors:	
<b>Plan for learning</b>	Learning Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know:</li> <li>• Understand:</li> <li>• Do:</li> </ul>	
	Assessment Task:	Pre-assessment:
	Adjustments/Strategies to Include all Students	
<b>Describe key learning experiences</b>	Learning Sequence	
<b>Reflect on the unit</b>	Reflection	

For practical examples of how to apply this template see *Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning*.



## Blank lesson plan proforma

Introduction:	Adjustments:
Explicit Teaching:	
Student Action: (Guided and Independent)	
Review	

For practical examples of how to apply the proforma see *Good Teaching: Curriculum Mapping and Planning*.

### Adjustments

Adjustments are supports, accommodations or adaptations that assist a student to access meaningful learning opportunities, to achieve their learning goals and show evidence of their learning.

Some adjustments may be at the whole school level and applied to all teaching and learning environments, teaching strategies and curriculum content. Others may be subject specific and involve fine grain alterations such as breaking information into smaller chunks and allowing extended time for completing work.

Adjustments take into account students' physical, cognitive, social and sensory differences.



# Summary of Differentiation Strategies

	Change: promote interest & engagement	Challenge: student's readiness to learn	Choice: range of learning profiles
<p><b>Content</b> Instructional input</p>	<p><b>Vary the 'vehicle'</b> used to engage with content; e.g. explore a period in history through a novel or focus on a topic of high interest to students.  <b>Vary the mode</b> of presentation of information.  <b>Focus on concepts and big ideas.</b>  <b>Provide more breadth</b> with enrichment tasks that may be optional.</p>	<p><b>Provide 'tiers' of complexity in resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concrete -&gt; symbolic -&gt; abstract</li> <li>Simple (clear, straightforward) -&gt; complex (intricate, ambiguous).</li> </ul> <p>Consider level of <b>language skill</b>.            Vary amount of <b>repetition and consolidation</b> depending on need.</p>	<p><b>Include a range of types of resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>text varying level of difficulty and genre (fiction, nonfiction, bilingual texts, cartoons, report, blog, artefacts etc.)</li> <li>multimedia (images, video, podcast)</li> <li>simulation, animation</li> <li>experts</li> <li>primary and secondary sources.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process</b> Teaching mode Task design</p>	<p><b>Vary method of instruction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Direct instruction</b> by including mini lessons and using 'gradual release of responsibility'.</li> <li><b>Inquiry learning</b> through guided structure:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» investigation</li> <li>» problem solving</li> <li>» case study e.g. web quest.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Flexible groups</b> using co-operative learning strategies.</li> <li>Tasks that create <b>dissonance or emotional connection</b>; e.g. use humour and empathy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Diagnostic pre-test</b> to establish existing knowledge; e.g. <i>Improve</i> – online tool.</p> <p><b>Task design</b> reflecting student readiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plan from <b>clear learning goals</b></li> <li><b>address all levels of thinking</b> (Bloom's taxonomy)</li> <li><b>vary pacing</b> to allow for acceleration and/or exploration in depth</li> <li>vary amount and nature of <b>scaffolding</b></li> <li>include <b>open-ended options</b> with ambiguity and complexity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student roles</b> within the method of instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>leadership</li> <li>member of co-operative team.</li> </ul> <p><b>Choice of tasks</b> to reflect varying degrees of readiness, interests and learning profile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAFT – Role, Audience, Format, Topic</li> <li>authentic tasks that matter to students in their world</li> <li>promote creative and critical thinking.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Product</b> Formative assessment – bridge between student and content Expression of understanding Summative assessment</p>	<p><b>Use formative assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>graphic organisers</li> <li>label a diagram</li> <li>written responses</li> <li>cloze</li> <li>concept maps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Range of assessment options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Tests</b> – range of question types, quizzes, re-testing, time variation.</li> <li><b>Portfolios</b> – digital portfolio increases the possible options.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Formative assessment</b> – use ongoing, formal and informal strategies.</p> <p><b>Indicators of quality learning outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criteria articulated in rubric and informed by <i>Australian Curriculum</i> achievements standards or course criteria.</li> <li>Demonstrate through <b>exemplary models</b>. Include structured and open-ended assessment tasks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Range of ways to demonstrate understanding at all stages of learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow for demonstration mode that uses each student's strengths.</li> <li><b>Use technology</b> to increase options available – it supports editable, multimedia, hyperlinked, collaborative outputs.</li> <li>Involve authentic (real-world) audiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning environment</b> Structure and provide supports for learning</p>	<p><b>Vary the environment</b> where learning occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local community</li> <li>online, virtual.</li> </ul> <p>Use technologies available in the environment as tools for learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students' own technology</li> <li>school provided technologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Use inspirational materials</b> around the classroom to provoke curiosity and promote creativity</p>	<p><b>Create routines and processes that support independence;</b> e.g. edit own work for punctuation where the need is indicated by teacher.  <b>Support routines with environmental resources;</b> e.g. process for getting help on the computer outlined in a wall poster.</p>	<p><b>Provide supportive visual aids and information in the environment;</b> e.g. word walls or terminology trees.</p> <p><b>Arrange desks and resources to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promote collaboration</li> <li>provide easy access and minimise movement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Establish routines;</b> e.g. for quickly re-arranging desks for different types of interaction.</p>

# CONTENT DIFFERENTIATION

Content can be differentiated through:

- Making adjustments to the content described in curriculum framework documents such as the *Australian Curriculum*.
- Choosing learning resources and stimulus materials that meet a student's preferred mode of learning and stage of development.
- Using technology to locate and provide content at a range of levels and in modes that engage and support learning.

The *Australian Curriculum* describes the content that all students are entitled to engage with, from Foundation (Prep) to Year 10. Year 11 and 12 materials are currently in development.

The three dimensions of the *Australian Curriculum* (learning area content, general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities) provide teachers with flexibility in meeting each student's individual learning needs.

Planning begins at a student's school year level to ensure continuity in their curriculum entitlement without unnecessary repetition. From that common starting point, teachers can make adjustments to the level and focus of the content so that all of their students can access rich learning experiences that are relevant and engaging. The curriculum content provides the context for students' goals for learning and assessment of their progress towards those goals, (see flow chart on page 22).

Within any identified area of content, teachers provide students with resources and stimulus materials to engage their interest and support their learning. To support effective learning, content materials need to address student needs and make use of their strengths.

Materials can be sought in a range of modes including images, audio recordings, videos, printed text, learning objects and simulations. The level of complexity in language, text and page layout needs to match each student's stage of development. Hands-on and manipulative materials support direct, concrete experiences while symbolic representations such as diagrams, images and animations can provide access to complex ideas at a simple level. More abstract representation of ideas can be presented through words as in poetry and symbols as in mathematics.

Content materials can also be differentiated by the genre and reading level demands. Content materials can reflect a student's background. For example, narrative texts could be sourced to reflect a student's background or students and their parents could be invited to contribute texts from their culture.

Technology can be used to locate online content resources, to organise them in easily accessible ways and to provide personalised, targeted learning for selected students.

Some search engines, including Google™ – advanced search, have functionality that allows the search results to be filtered by reading level and/or file type. This can be useful when searching for resources. For example, games, animations or simulations are often Flash™ files. Other search tools are designed to return results designed for a specific age group, typically younger children, or a type of resource, such as videos for education.



Education portals such as Scootle provide good sources of quality-assured content resources that are typically searchable by year level, learning area and topic or key words.

Online learning resources can be linked to the school intranet to make content easy for students to access. Content that is shared online can be accessed by students who need to re-visit materials to consolidate their learning. Classroom technologies with access to appropriate digital content provide a flexible way for teachers to manage personalised content at a range of different levels.

Some teachers are using videos of direct teaching of new content, to 'front load' learning prior to class time. Students watch the video as homework; pausing, rewinding, making notes, identifying questions and so on as needed. This means that more class time is available for discussions, practical activities and other learning tasks that benefit from face-to-face interaction. This general process has become known as 'flipping' the classroom and provides one way to manage differentiated classroom learning by utilising online content.

Content differentiation using technology requires careful planning. In keeping with the backward design model. Teachers need to be clear about the learning goals before they make decisions about pedagogy and the digital tools their students will use.

The technology needs to match the nature of the learning task and enhance students' learning outcomes in identifiable ways. Questions to keep in mind include:

- Will digital technologies improve students' learning relative to the learning goals?
- Which technology tools will enhance students' engagement and ability to demonstrate their understanding?
- What tools are available to students in the classroom?
- What tools can students bring from home to assist with their learning?

The practical aspects of how the technology is managed can influence its effectiveness as a tool for learning. It is important that students can engage quickly and easily with the tools they are using, that sufficient bandwidth is available and that this is consistent across all students.

## Practical examples



### Example of simplifying content for a student with special needs (Video 3m 48s)

In this illustration of personalised learning, the teacher planned a revision lesson from the Year 10 Australian Curriculum: History content and reduced the lesson demand for a student requiring additional support. With the student in mind, the teacher provided a tailored learning task with a focus on entry level comprehension of the key concepts covered so far.

Throughout the unit the teacher worked on developing the student's level of independence, literacy and positive peer interactions which are key aspects of the student's individual education plan. As the unit progressed and new information lessened, the student displayed increased confidence and the teacher was able to gradually reduce scaffolds and adult support.

Source: The Australian Curriculum – Illustrations of personalised learning  
<http://www.acara.edu.au/illustrations/OPL00007/>



### Example of using computer games to personalise content –early years mathematics (Video 6m 8s)

In this video the teacher uses technology as a tool to provide differentiated Mathematics content for the students in his early years classroom. The programs and apps he selects are carefully sequenced to meet the students' needs at their current stage of progress. The programs provide an engaging way for students to practice and reinforce their learning of concepts and skills; they receive personalised, immediate feedback and have more challenging work to progress on to once they have demonstrated mastery. The teacher uses these resources as a way to free him to work individually with students who benefit from his personal support.

Source: TeachingChannel (USA)  
[https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/differentiating-in-math\\_](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/differentiating-in-math_)



## Scootle information sheet



*Scootle* gives teachers access to many thousands of digital curriculum resources they can use to inform their own planning and support their teaching. The resources include learning objects, images, videos, audio, assessment resources, teacher resources and collections organised around common topics or themes. The resources are aligned to the endorsed areas of the *Australian Curriculum*.

Teachers can create, annotate and sequence 'learning paths' for their students. A learning path provides students with direct access to a teacher-selected collection of digital materials from *Scootle* that will support their learning around a specific topic or concept. Learning paths can be shared with other teachers.

**Logging in:** Teachers in Tasmanian government schools log in using their DoE username and password.



**Finding materials:** To browse what is available for particular curriculum content, use the *Find by Australian Curriculum* tab and filter by year level. Expand the relevant content descriptor and click on the View elaborations and matching resources link to return a list of resources that support that aspect of the curriculum.



**Formative assessment:** *Scootle* also provides access to the *Improve* online formative assessment tool. Teachers select questions from a searchable database to create an online quiz that focuses on a particular aspect of learning in literacy, numeracy or science. Students complete the quiz online at anytime from anywhere and their responses are automatically assessed and reported to the teacher to inform their planning.



**Ideas for using technology:** *Scootle* also provides access to *ICT in Everyday Learning: A Toolkit*. The toolkit is a collection of practical examples that illustrate how pedagogy, content and technology can be successfully and effectively integrated to promote learning.

**Community:** *Scootle* also hosts networks of teachers from around Australia to share ideas and resources, ask questions and publicise events.





## Process for differentiating the content using the *Australian Curriculum* – Flowchart

**Step 1. Refer to the learning area content** described for the student's year level.



**Step 2. Make adjustments** to reflect each student's strengths, goals, interests and current levels of learning by:



OR



OR



**A.** Drawing from aspects of content at, above or below year level.

**B.** Adjusting the learning focus using the general capabilities or cross curriculum priorities.

**C.** Developing skills, understandings and knowledge identified in a student's personalised learning plan through aspects of year level content.



**Step 3. Assess the students' progress:**

- A. Learning area achievement standards OR
- B. Level of progression in the general capabilities OR
- C. Student learning plan SMART Goals



## PROCESS DIFFERENTIATION

The teaching and learning processes initiated by the teacher so that students engage with new learning can be differentiated by:

- Selecting the most appropriate teaching strategy to facilitate effective learning for the students.
- Designing learning tasks that remove barriers and limitations for students and engage their interest in the material.
- Considering ways to provide flexibility in the pace and grouping structures used.

Through time, teachers build on their repertoire of teaching strategies they can draw upon to engage their students' interest, and facilitate effective and efficient learning. These strategies can include:

- explicit teaching
- gradual release of responsibility
- inquiry learning
- co-operative learning
- thinking routines
- reflective processes.

Teachers differentiate by selecting the most appropriate strategy for a task to facilitate each student's engagement and learning. This might happen when planning a lesson, or even in response to a student's needs during a lesson. Differentiated teaching is often referred to as responsive teaching, reflecting the way in which a teacher moves from using one mode to another as required.

Teachers also design authentic and relevant tasks for students so they can actively engage with the concepts, information and skills identified in the curriculum. Tasks that have a number of entry points and directions, lend themselves well to differentiation. Tasks can be differentiated by pre-planning prompts, questions and supports that will enable and support learning for those students experiencing difficulty, and that increase the degree of challenge and complexity for those students who need extension, (see table on pages 24 and 25).

Students' rates of learning can vary. Students who learn quickly are able to grasp new ideas easily and are ready to move on with little need for consolidation. They may become bored and disengaged with too much repetition. Other students need more time. They may require multiple opportunities to engage with content in a range of different contexts to build and consolidate their understanding. Teachers who differentiate pre-plan to accommodate variations in the pace of learning, so that fast learners are challenged with higher-level extension work, whilst others have the time and support they need to learn and consolidate at their own level.

Trying to meet a range of needs as they arise in the classroom (doing it 'on the fly') can be stressful for teachers and result in less than optimum outcomes. More able students who finish quickly may be given more work to do at the same level, which can be a strong disincentive for them to perform at their best, while students who are struggling can have a range of different needs that are not being met and they may disengage from the learning. Forward planning for the range of learners pays off with more students engaged and learning effectively and more professional satisfaction for the teacher.

*"A philosophy of responsive instruction suggests that fairness in academically diverse settings is best conceived not as treating everyone alike, but working to ensure that each student has the support he or she needs to succeed."* Carol Ann Tomlinson





## Questions to guide differentiated task design

<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Extenders</b>
<p><b>The questions below are designed to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support students who experience difficulty getting started or during the task.</li> <li>• Provide extra support/scaffolding.</li> <li>• Create active experiences that lead into the task.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The questions below are designed to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend students who learn quickly.</li> <li>• Create more challenging questions/tasks to extend their breadth, depth and complexity.</li> <li>• Create active experiences that build from the task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Simplifying</b></p> <p><b>Are there ways I can simplify an aspect of the task?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to content using a range of technologies or with lower level of literacy or numeracy demand – <b>Content</b></li> <li>• Provide an intermediate step that incorporates background knowledge, understanding or skills – <b>Process</b></li> <li>• Allow multiple ways to present understanding, use ICT as appropriate (e.g. device that enables access) – <b>Product</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Thinking</b></p> <p><b>Are there ways I can extend the level of thinking required for the task?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the level of literacy or numeracy demand in content so it requires inference or extrapolation – <b>Content</b></li> <li>• Extend the level of thinking of the task (e.g. use Bloom's taxonomy). – <b>Process</b></li> <li>• Stimulate creative thinking in the task (e.g. use "Thinkers keys") – <b>Process</b></li> <li>• Use products that involve creation, evaluation and/or innovation – <b>Product</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Organising</b></p> <p><b>Can I provide additional organisational support for the task?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly teach key vocabulary (e.g. glossary) – <b>Content</b></li> <li>• Use technology/ICT (e.g. timers to assist in understanding time frames) – <b>Process</b></li> <li>• Provide graphic organisers – <b>Process and product</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding</b></p> <p><b>Can the task require greater depth and complexity in understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide optional content to provide breadth (e.g. include the language of the discipline) – <b>Content</b></li> <li>• Provide tasks that require depth and complexity (e.g. use Kaplan prompts) – <b>Process</b></li> <li>• Extend expectation of quality in product, and/or use ICT – <b>Product</b></li> </ul>

(Table continues over page)



## Questions to guide differentiated task design (continued from previous page)

<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Extenders</b>
<p><b>Materialising</b></p> <p><b>Can I make the task more concrete?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual representations, explore real life objects, physically participating in a representation – <a href="#">Content</a></li> <li>• Teacher gives a ‘guided tour’ of the task – <a href="#">Process</a></li> <li>• Provide examples of completed product through a visual representation or model – <a href="#">Product</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Generalising</b></p> <p><b>Are there generalisations or abstractions that can be applied to the task?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use content that addresses big ideas and discipline concepts – <a href="#">Content</a></li> <li>• Use open-ended tasks that require independent application of the learning – <a href="#">Process</a></li> <li>• Use products that integrate multiple representations – <a href="#">Product</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Clarifying</b></p> <p><b>Can I make the expectations more explicit?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct students to resources – <a href="#">Content</a></li> <li>• Explicit step-by-step instructions describing the task – <a href="#">Process</a></li> <li>• Expected product; visual representation or model – <a href="#">Product</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Connecting</b></p> <p><b>Are there possibilities for authentic real world connections to the learning?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use authentic sources of data and other primary sources of information – <a href="#">Content</a></li> <li>• Use authentic problems to solve – <a href="#">Process</a></li> <li>• Use authentic audiences to communicate and collaborate with – <a href="#">Product</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging</b> (Refer to Personalised Learning Plan)</p> <p><b>Can I tap into student strength /interests?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for student input/voice in shaping the task and/or the product</li> </ul>	<p><b>Engaging</b> (Refer to Personalised Learning Plan)</p> <p><b>Can I tap into student strength /interests?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for student input/voice in shaping the task and/or the product</li> </ul>

## Practical examples



### This Year 8 science example has adjusted tasks for different groups

(Video 3m 28s)

In this illustration of practice the teacher, who is also the sustainability co-ordinator, bases the learning on an energy inquiry and design unit of work to build a wind turbine. They differentiate by drawing from the cross curriculum priorities to provide an authentic context and increased challenge.

The teacher asks students to think about the broader implications of energy in terms of environmental impact and sustainability. In order to support students' learning across the range of ability in their class, the teacher establishes mixed ability groups and encourages peer to peer tutoring. To further differentiate the task, groups are given different design challenges. With the students working in groups the teacher is freed up to move about the groups and offer individualised support or further prompts to develop students' understandings.

Source: Based on Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) materials; Illustrations of personalised learning: <http://www.acara.edu.au/illustrations/IOPL00010/>



### An example of how to introduce difficult concepts in a Year 9 history class

Students bring different abilities to the classroom. To cater for the full range of ability in their class, a Year 9 history teacher designs tasks that have different entry points. For their study of World War I, they begin a discussion of the causes of the war with a general discussion of the concept of 'cause and effect'.

The teacher scaffolds the learning by asking students to discuss scenarios where 'cause and effect' is either direct and explicit or more subtle and implied. Examples include 'billiard balls hitting one another', 'earthquakes occurring at sea', 'students forming gangs in the playground', 'friends being dragged into feuds' and 'butterflies flapping their wings in South America'.

To expand student learning, the teacher prepares cards with general statements about causation at a range of levels of complexity. Examples include 'events always have a cause', 'a cause always happens before an event', 'everybody always agrees about the causes of things', 'if it happened a long time before the event it can't be a cause', 'some causes are more important than others' and 'some causes are accidental, others are planned'. They ask students to discuss these statements and sort the cards into three piles; 'True', 'False', 'Unsure'.

The task is done in groups of similar ability. Some groups are offered more basic cards as a starting point whereas others begin with the more complex statements. Students are encouraged to talk about their choices and a whole class discussion occurs at the end. The discussion leads into a more detailed look at the events leading up to World War I.



### An example of scaffolding and extending a cooking task

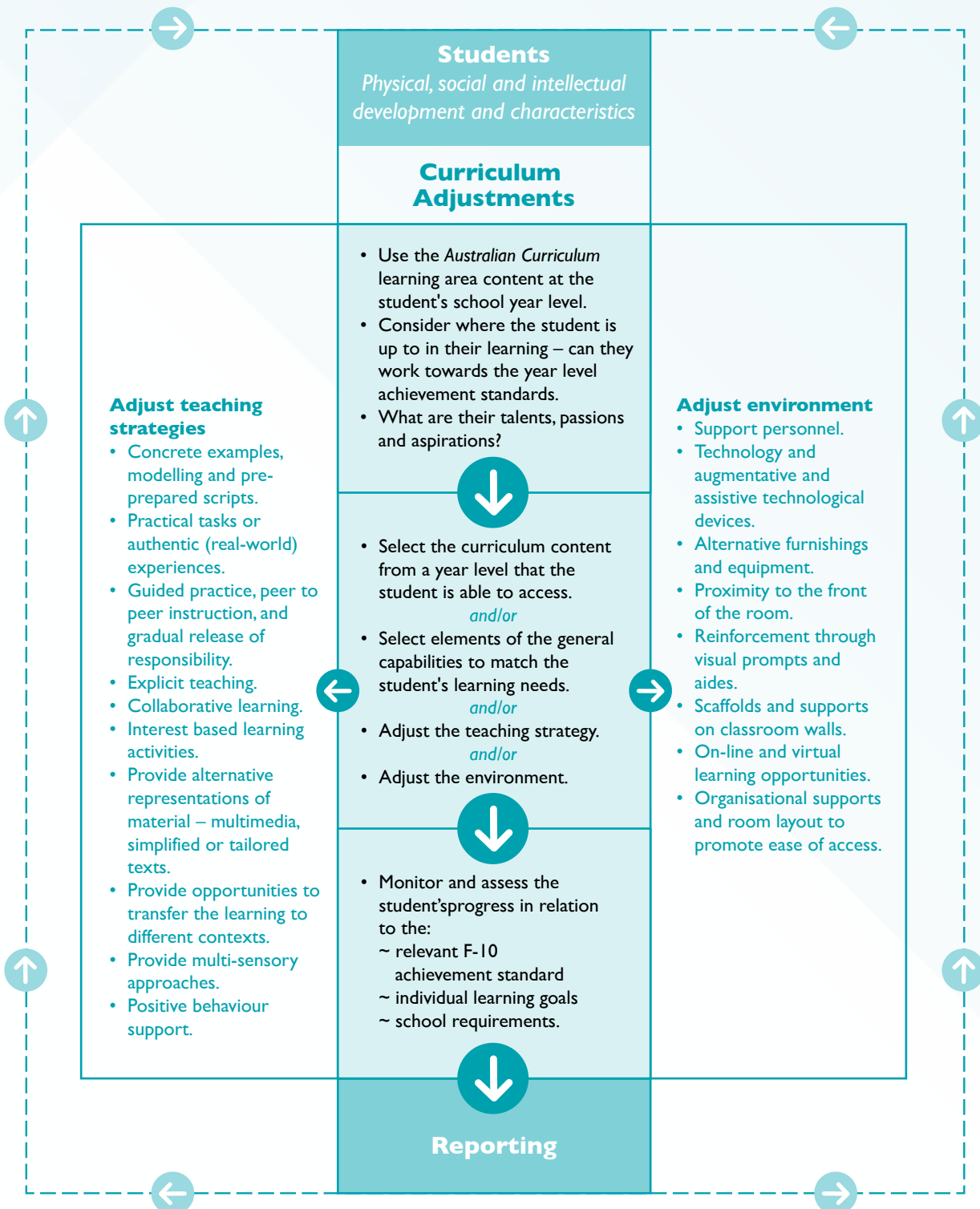
In planning for a senior secondary Food Cooking and Nutrition Level 2 class, the teacher accommodates the needs of students with special needs and English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), in addition to students who are also studying a range of pre-tertiary subjects.

Whilst covering the content and skills required, the teacher prepares recipes with differentiated levels of visual cues such as graphical representations of the foods or relevant measuring tools to support students' understanding of the ingredients and method. Vocabulary for the names of various ingredients is supported by having laminated labels for all of the necessary ingredients prepared prior to class starting. YouTube demonstrations of recipes are played on wireless tablets when available to enable students to follow the online demonstrations at their own pace. The teacher has also created some of their own videos of demonstrations.

Students with stronger language and cooking skills are extended by through tasks with additional skill demands (e.g. devising and implementing a plan to prepare two recipes within the same lesson) and explaining the process for the additional recipe to the class.



## Making adjustments flowchart



# PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION

A key principle of differentiation is that it removes barriers and limitations to learning. This must also apply when it comes to enabling students to demonstrate what they really know, understand and can do, through the products they create. A lack of skill with a tool or genre such as a hand written essay, can mask the true level of understanding a student has developed.

For formative assessment purposes, alternatives may need to be considered to gain accurate insight into their learning progress.

Tasks that are differentiated to take account of each student's needs, strengths and interests may result in a range of different artefacts being produced.

When designing tasks and their associated products teachers can consider:

- A common learning task may be differentiated just in the products created through the learning.
- A student's level of skill with tools used to communicate their learning needs to be taken into account.
- Technology tools can be powerful enablers for differentiating the products that result from learning tasks.
- Providing choice and flexibility in the tool used to create products of learning allows students a voice in their learning.

As they engage with learning tasks, students produce artefacts or products that help to demonstrate where they are up to in their learning. These artefacts can include paper-based products, digital products, 3-D products or performances. They may result from tasks designed for summative assessment purposes, or from formative tasks designed to inform both teachers and students about how learning is progressing and what the next steps need to be.

Differentiating the learning task may mean that a range of different products are generated. The evidence of learning demonstrated in the product should align with the learning goals for the unit and those identified in each student's learning plan.

For example, if the learning goal relates to creating a text that uses a range of persuasive devices, a simple product may require just the choice of appropriate illustrations and words. A more complex product for the same learning goal could require the inclusion of persuasive elements such as page layout, font size, colour, icons and sound.

Technology now provides a range of free or reasonably priced and easily accessible digital tools for students. These range from digital mind mapping tools, to multimedia authoring tools, to digital art and design tools. More and more schools are encouraging students to bring and use their own technology devices to use at school. Responsibility for the knowledge of how those tools operate has shifted from the teacher to the students, providing authentic opportunities for students and their teachers to learn with, and from one another, and to utilise skills they may have gained outside school.

Digital products also lend themselves to sharing with a broader audience than just the teacher or others within the school. Through the internet, there are opportunities for students to create products for 'real' audiences addressing authentic issues, which can add a very engaging and motivating dimension to a task.

Students will vary in their level of skill with the tools that are used to create learning products. Providing students with choice and support can give teachers more accurate insight into the nature and level of each student's understanding when lack of skill with a particular tool does not get in the way. It can enhance the level of student ownership over their learning and is likely to increase the level of motivation and engagement with the task.

### ICT in everyday learning: a toolkit for teachers



This collection of practical examples illustrates how pedagogy, content and technology can be successfully integrated in order to promote learning.

The toolkit draws on the TPACK framework with a focus on technological (T), pedagogical (P) and content knowledge (CK) needed for a teacher to be effective in a technology enhanced classroom. It illustrates the kinds of professional knowledge that facilitates teaching and learning in the 21st Century.

It contains a collection of model learning activities across F-10 Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics, Science and History that cater for a broad range of abilities.

It also includes tutorials for many of the tools recommended.

Note: the site should be accessed by logging in to the Scootle portal and searching for "ICT in everyday learning".

<https://www.scootle.edu.au>

### Possible products and performances

Student products and performances should be framed by the identified learning goals and an intended audience.

Written	Oral	Visual
advertisement	debate	cartoon
blog	dramatisation	collage
editorial	interview	flow chart
historical fiction	oral presentation	game
letter	podcast	mind map/ concept map
magazine article	puppet show	model
newspaper article	radio script	slideshow
play	rap	photograph
position paper	speech	video
web site	teach a lesson	



## Practical examples



### An example of how different task expectations are reflected in different products

A Year 5 teacher is designing an assessment task for a unit on nutrition to gauge each student's understanding of the benefits of healthy eating and the consequences of an unhealthy diet. Some students in the class are learning English as an additional language and their language proficiency is still developing.

Other students in the class have a very advanced understanding of the use of key vocabulary, sentence structure and page layout. The teacher differentiates the core task of creating an information text about healthy diet by changing the product, audience and language expectations for these two groups.

The EAL/D students are asked to produce a picture book with simple text and appropriate images about healthy eating for Year 1 students in the school. The students requiring extension are asked to create either a detailed brochure or an online page about healthy eating that includes FAQs. It will be used at the local medical centre where the audience is teenagers and adults.

All students have the opportunity to gain extra credit by demonstrating creativity in the way their text attracts the attention of the audience. They are invited to select the tool they use to create their text.



### An example of how tool selection can support student needs

A student with limitations to their short-term memory processing capacity struggles to write their thoughts using a pen and paper because this task requires them to simultaneously attend to pencil hold, letter formation, word selection, spelling and grammar.

Providing this student with the option of using a computer using software packages such as *Clicker* or *Dragon Naturally Speaking* as their writing tool or using a digital recording device such as an iPad, can release them from attending to some of those things. This frees up their cognitive capacity to focus more on what they want to say.

When the act of handwriting is not a focus for the learning, these tools are far more effective and equitable in supporting this student to communicate their learning. The student's classroom teacher considers this when planning learning task products.



### An example of differentiating assessment

A student with autism spectrum disorder who is resistant to writing is studying VET Certificate I in Hospitality. Their teacher has planned to accommodate the student's needs by articulating in the Training and Assessment Strategy that they will be provided with opportunities, including oral testing, to assess their knowledge in units which would usually be covered in the class workbook. The VET Co-ordinator records the testing in an audio file for audit purposes.





# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiated teaching is both pro-active and responsive. It involves planning ahead to optimise the conditions for learning, as well as being reflective and responding thoughtfully to the 'lived experience' of classroom teaching and learning.

There are many aspects of the learning environment that can either facilitate or inhibit learning for students. These can be consciously adjusted by the teacher to meet the particular needs of a group of students. They include physical, social, aesthetic and organisational aspects of the learning environment.

A teacher who is using the learning environment to support differentiated classroom learning attends to a range of things which might include:

- Physical provisions that enable access to resources and facilitate a range of ways for students to work, collaborate and socialise.
- Classroom routines that minimise disruption and maximise time on task.
- Strategies that accommodate flexible groupings.
- Use of wall space for posters and other materials that scaffold learning.
- Strategies for organising work materials and learning resources that build student independence and self-management.
- Expectations that create a safe context for learning from mistakes and striving for excellence.
- A culture that welcomes and learns from cultural diversity and builds respect.
- Responsibility for learning is viewed as being shared by all including teachers, students, support staff, parents and carers.
- Considering how transferring learning outside the classroom environment might enhance student learning.
- Considering ways that online and virtual environments might contribute to learning.

## Practical examples



### **An example of how seating arrangements support learning**

(Video 1m 2s)

In this video, a teacher describes the thinking behind how she arranges classroom seating to facilitate collaborative learning, provide easy access to learning materials and minimise movement around the classroom.

Source: Teaching channel (USA)

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/seating-arrangements?fd=1>



### **An example of how a teacher creates positive expectations**

(Video 4m 14s)

In this video a teacher focuses on developing a positive learning environment and high expectations for success with his students in a composite class. The teacher models the learning process for students by using an 'I do, we do, you do' strategy and emphasises the importance of providing students with purposeful and understandable feedback to support achievement. In the 'you do' phase the teacher uses an online resource to differentiate teaching to meet the individual students strengths and needs.

Source: AITSL Illustrations of practice

<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/Illustrations/ViewIOP/IOP00299/index.html>



### **An example of using the learning environment outside the classroom**

(Video 7m 45s)

Involving students in planned purposeful learning experiences out of the classroom is another way to differentiate using the learning environment. In this video, students use the local bushland as an environment for their own learning and using technology to teach others in another language.

Source: AITSL Illustrations of practice

<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/Illustrations/PreviewIOP/ecb2215c-b3bc-4ef8-a13d-a1e100ed35f8/index.html>



### An example of establishing a classroom culture

In the first two weeks of Term 1, a high school English teacher makes a point of planning to understand their students. They aim to prepare learning experiences that are pitched appropriately to each student's readiness, interests and learning profiles. The teacher spends time to gather data using the Student Support System. They look through each student's academic data, previous reports, attendance data and the anecdotal comments recorded by previous teachers.

For students with Personalised Learning Plans, the teacher spends time reviewing each student's background, strengths, interests and needs. They note the scaffolds and adjustments that work well for the student.

The teacher is aware that several students are at risk of academic failure as they are not able to read independently. If the right levels of support are not provided to these students they will not be able to access the key learning area concepts.

When establishing their classroom culture the core message is that students will be given challenges and opportunities to explore their interests. Effort is highly prized and mutual respect and support are encouraged.



### An example of an healthy classroom environment

A Year 6 teacher sets out to establish a classroom environment to support differentiated learning. The classroom is organised for flexibility and to encourage independence in how students manage their own learning. There is space for students to engage in a variety of activities, both independently and in groups. Students are encouraged to use a range of print and digital resources, supported by a classroom library and well organised class page on the school intranet. They take responsibility for their own learning and contribute to that of their peers using collaborative resources such as the interactive whiteboard.

The focus for the teacher is to create and facilitate a range of learning tasks at different levels of demand for their students that cater to their individual needs. Students are given choices about how they demonstrate their learning. All students feel valued and value their peers and their teacher.



### An example of working together as a school

The school leadership team at a high school have come together to discuss and plan for renewed whole school approaches to School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS).

In recent times, a small proportion of students across year levels are finding it difficult to engage in their work. They are acting up and being a disruptive influence throughout any given day. The team look through the well-being and behaviour data to pinpoint the frequency and severity of incidents and begin planning proactive measures. Using supports such as *Respectful schools and workplaces* and *Respectful Schools Respectful Behaviour*, they engage the staff and the community to develop a whole school approach to respectful behaviour that acknowledges the core values they wish to promote as a school.

After explicit teaching, modelling and rewards for students who enact these values, staff, report a decrease in behavioural incidents over time. There is a corresponding shift in engagement and more positive learning outcomes for students.

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