

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Summary

AASE Inc. is committed to advocating for the provision of quality education services for students with special education needs. It is imperative that such provisions be based on current research and exemplary practice as reviewed in the attached document. The field of special education is not a place but rather provides an intensive analysis of curriculum, instruction and the school environment in order to maximise learning outcomes for students with special education needs. **Thus appropriate curriculum, instruction and environment are the key to a quality education for the full range of students with special education needs.**

Curriculum must articulate the set of learning outcomes which has to be taught. Curriculum content must:

- Cover the full range of skills, knowledge and values across the academic and social domains
- Provide a scope and sequence which builds on prior knowledge
- Provide a framework to access and integrate new information
- Be the focus for on-going assessment and instruction
- Enable a correlation between curriculum and students outcomes

Curriculum-based assessment provide the link between curriculum and instruction. This type of assessment, which can be implemented by teachers, can:

- assess the students' performance on the curriculum
- identify teaching points on the curriculum
- monitor student progress
- Be used as a basis for instructional decision-making

The use of effective instruction, also referred to as explicit teaching and effective teaching, enable the most efficient use of class time to maximise learning outcomes for students. Effective instruction is a set of critical teacher behaviours which can:

- be embedded in a range of quality teaching methods
- maximise students' on-task behaviour
- minimise inappropriate behaviours of students
- provide teacher with strategies in planning, managing, delivering and evaluating instruction to ensure outcomes for all students

A positive school climate fosters learning through a commitment to high expectations for all students and effective classroom management. The school climate will be enhanced by:

- Positive student/teacher interactions
- Involvement of parents as active partners in the education process
- Collaborative partnerships between students, families, teachers, special educators and other professional who support the students' education
- The merger of exemplary educational practices and curriculum knowledge to produce quality outcomes for all students

A quality education for students with the full range of special education needs is characterised by access to relevant curriculum and effective instruction within a positive environment.

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION INC.
POSITION PAPER**

TOPIC: Quality Education for Students with Special Needs

BACKGROUND

AASE Inc is committed to advocating for the provision of quality education services for students with special needs. It is imperative that such provisions be based on current research and exemplary practice. This paper will review the literature to pinpoint the essential features of a quality educational program.

The literature review identifies a range of concepts and issues which can be addressed through the contexts of curriculum, instruction and school environment. Consideration of these contexts is the same when planning programs for all students. The field of special education provides an intensive analysis of curriculum, instruction and the school environment in order to maximise learning outcomes for students. As such, special education is a process rather than physical place.

Curriculum

Curriculum is the mechanism that organises the knowledge, skills and values expected to be achieved by students during their school life. It provides a set of learning outcomes which allows for the development of knowledge and skills as well as learning how to learn across the full range of content areas (Howell, 2000; Kinder, 1991; Leshowitz, 1993; Rosenshine, 1995).

Well designed curriculum delineates well connected and extensive knowledge structures which enable students to build on prior knowledge, chunk increasing amounts of information and provide a framework to access and integrate new information (Howell, 2000). This statement recognises that some content can be analysed into a fixed sequence of steps whereas some higher order skills are less structured yet build and depend upon prior knowledge (Rosenshine, 1995; Westwood, 1995a).

A thorough knowledge of a content domain and curriculum design principles is the foundation for effective assessment, evaluation, decision making and instruction (Howell, 2000). To fulfil these roles, the curriculum must be “developed so information in a particular domain Is selected, prioritised, sequenced, organised and scheduled for instruction” (Simmons, 1996), p. 5) and flexible in assisting to meet positive learning outcomes for individuals. Thus curriculum articulates what has to be taught in the academic and social domains rather than prescribing how the skills, knowledge and values are to be taught (Howell, 2000). Such a curriculum can be adapted to accommodate individual student’s needs through organising content into smaller or larger segments, accommodations that have significant effects for instruction. A good understanding of the principles of well designed curriculum sets higher expectations for all students and increase the chances of meeting the needs of the full range of students with special education needs (Warger, 1996).

Curriculum needs to be the basis upon which assessment and subsequent programming and instructional decisions are made. Curriculum-based assessment and curriculum-based measurement both assess student performance in relation to the curriculum (Evans, 1995; Bracey, 1995). These assessments, which can be implemented by teacher, are most sensitive to student learning than traditional assessment methodology and reflect a closer match to knowledge, skills and values taught in classrooms (Howell, 2000). Curriculum-based assessment directly assesses curriculum

outcomes being taught in classrooms and forms the basis for instructional decisions. Curriculum-based measurement assists in monitoring student progress and making decisions regarding placement and resource allocation by comparing peers on content drawn from the curriculum (Evans, 1995).

The close link between assessment and curriculum assists in providing feedback to parents, students and the community as well as provide credential at the end of schooling for all students.

Instruction

Curriculum is what we teach;
Instruction is how we teach it; and
Evaluation guides the process.

(Howell, 2000)

The characteristics of effective instruction are reported by educational researchers who study the critical teacher behaviours in classroom settings (Allinder, 1995) Hotchkis, 1995 (Wang, 1996). The literature also refers to the terms *effective teaching* and *explicit teaching* or *instruction*. However, it must be noted that effective instruction is not a method of teaching but rather a series of characteristics which can be embedded into a range of teaching methods (Good, 1994). Zalud, Hoag and Wood (cited in Westwood, 1995b) and Harris and Graham (1996) acknowledge that it is better to use a variety of teaching approaches rather than adhere to only one approach. Effective instruction enables the efficient use of class time to maximise learning outcomes for students (Slavin, 1996b; Evans, 1995; Greenwood, 1994). There is also significant research to indicate effective instruction maximises on-task behaviour of students and minimises inappropriate behaviour (Carpenter, 1996; Munk, 1994).

The effective instruction literature identifies a number of teacher behaviours that positively correlate with academic success for students (Scruggs, 1994). Effective instruction involves implementing strategies in planning, managing, delivering and evaluating instruction (Ysseldyke, 1995). Effective teacher use the following strategies:

Planning instruction

- Use curriculum-based assessment to determine place in the curriculum (Allinder, 1995; Bracey, 1992; Howell, 2000)
- Define expected student outcomes/goals (Allinder, 1995; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Westwood, 1995a; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Set challenging and realistic expectations for all students yet allowing for individual differences (Allinder, 1995; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996)

Managing instruction

- Establish a positive class environment (Allinder, 1995; Wang, 1996; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Establish then teach lesson rules and procedures (Bracey, 1992; Fisher, 1995; Greenwood, 1994; Kinder, 1991; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995; Wang, 1996; Westwood, 1995a; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Allocate time for directly teaching skills, knowledge and concepts (Greenwood, 1994; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Westwood, 1995a)
- Maintain a high rate of task engagement (Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Minimise disruptions by organising the physical space, keeping transitions between activities short and restricting interruptions (Bracey, 1992; Westwood, 1995a; Ysseldyke, 1995)

Delivering instruction

- Provide tasks which ensure students achieve a high rate of success King-Sears, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Get the students attention (Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Inform students of the instructional goal (Bracey, 1995; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Use clear and precise instructions/language (Westwood, 1995a, 1993; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Review previous work at the start of the lesson (Bracey, 1992; Gagnon, Maccini & Maccini, 2001; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996, Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Westwood, 1995a)
- Break target skill in to small steps (Bracey, 1992; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Swanson et al., 1999; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Actively teach cognitive strategies Fisher, 1995; Kavale, 2000; Notari-Syverson et al., 1996; Ostrocky & Kaiser, 1995; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Swanson et al., 1999; Westwood, 1995a)
- Model skills and strategies Gagnon, Maccini & Maccini, 2001; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Notari-Syverson et al., 1996; Ostrocky & Kaiser, 1995; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Maintain a brisk pace (Kinder, 1991; Greenwood, 1994; Westwood, 1995b; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Provide a variety of exemplars (Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997)
- Question students frequently to check understanding (Montegue, 1993; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Scaffold instruction to support students complete a task (Dickinson et al., 2000; Larkin, 2001)
- Allow for guided and independent practice which allows for a mix of lower and higher order thinking skills (Greenwood, 1994; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Maccini & Hughes, 2000; Swanson & Hoskyn, 2001; Westwood, 1995a, 1995b)
- Practice skills or apply concepts until the students are fluent (Bracey, 1992; Rosenshine, 1995; Westwood, 1995a; Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001)
- Use of peer assistance and collaborative learning (Fisher, 1995; Ostrocky & Kaiser, 1995; Slavin, 1996a; Westwood, 1995a)
- Actively supervise or monitor the work of all students (Greenwood, 1994; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Werts et al., 1996; Westwood, 1995b)
- Use errors as opportunities to provide further instruction (Greenwood, 1994; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Rosenshine, 1995, 1997; Werts et al., 1996; Westwood, 1995b; 1993)
- Provide immediate feedback to students which is specific to the situation (Bracey, 1992; Greenwood, 1992; Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Give specific praise and encouragement (Marzano, 2001; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Adjust the lesson to meet student needs (e.g., extra instruction or intensive review) (Bracey, 1992; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Provide a closing summary at the end of the lessons (Kings-Sears & Cummins, 1996; Marzano, 2001)
- Include cumulative reviews (Bracey, 1992; Rosenshine, 1997; Westwood, 1995a, 1993)

Evaluating instruction

- Monitor student progress Allinder, 1995; Good, 2001; Greenwood, 1994; Howell & Nolet, 2000; Rosenshine, 1995; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Monitor academic engaged time (Axelrod, 1994; Greenwood, 1994; Ysseldyke, 1995)
- Use student progress data to make instruction decisions (Allinder, 1995; Howell & Nolet, 2000; Ysseldyke, 2001, 1995)

School environment

The context of the delivery of any program is vital to meeting the needs of all students. The amount and quality of instruction, classroom management, climate, student/teacher interactions, motivation and parental encouragement and support of learning are critical variables in influencing students learning (Wang, 1996). In addition, school culture, administrative issues and community influences are a moderate influence with district and state level policies having the least impact (Forlin, 1994) (Wang, 1996). High quality special education programs recognise the impact of the school and seek to positively structure or restructure the environment to ensure successful for all students. An in-depth discussion of school culture further information can be gleaned from the literature on effective schools and restructuring schools.

Teacher attitudes directly influence students' attitude and behaviour (Cartledge, 1996; Forlin, 1994). There is a danger of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers have low expectations of students with special needs (Westwood, 1995a). Different expectations for high and low achievers can result in differential treatment in all aspects of schooling (Howell, 2000). Teachers and school executive are able to create a positive school climate that values and accepts all students. School climate can foster learning when high expectations are held for all students. High expectations serve to strengthen students/teacher interactions, student motivation and academic achievement (Allinder, 1995; Westwood, 1995b).

Parents, along with their children, are partners with teachers in the education process (Brown, 1994). Effective home – school links should be based on mutual respect, recognition of the equity of the differing roles of parent and educator, sharing of information and skills leading to participation in the decision making process (Black, 1996; Mittler, 1995). Parent involvement in school activities will enhance the working partnership and ensure the students receive the best possible education (Black, 1996).

With the advent of inclusive curriculum, collaborative partnerships between students, families, special educators, teachers and other relevant professional is imperative (Banerji, 1995; Ellis & Stormont-Spurgin, 1996; Villa, Thousand, & Chapple, 1996; Warger, 1996). Collaboration provides the vehicle for the pooling of knowledge about curriculum, current curriculum trends, and the knowledge of effective practices to meet the needs of the diverse range of students in any class (Warger, 1996). Collaboration benefits the students, families and professionals in that it allows for the exemplary educational practices in curriculum knowledge to be merged to achieve improved student outcomes (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996).

The above mentioned features underpin quality educational programs. Students need to access relevant curriculum and appropriate instruction within a positive school environment (Westwood, 1995a). A highly trained teaching force is essential if students with special education needs are to access quality educational programs. Teacher and administrators need the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the diverse range of educational needs within every classroom. Special educators need to be trained in curriculum design, instructional methodologies, consultancy skills and collaboration.

These conclusions have implications for teacher training and the professional development of teachers. Training course must provide graduates with the necessary competencies if students with special education needs are to receive a quality educational program. After graduation, teachers and administrators require systematic development of their skills, knowledge and values, to ensure curriculum and instruction practices benefit all students, and are based on research validated principles.

Bibliography

- Allinder, R. (1995). An examination of the relationship between teacher efficacy and curriculum-based measurement and student achievement. *Remedial and Special Education, 16*(4), 247-254.
- Axelrod, S. G., R. (1994). Cooperative learning revisited. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 4*(1), 41-48.
- Banerji, M., & Dailey, R. (1995). The study of effects of an inclusion model on students with specific learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 28*(8), 511-522.
- Black, N. (1996). *Parent mentor program*. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children, Orlando, Florida.
- Bracey, S. (1992). *Effective teaching: Teaching techniques for students with special needs in the regular classroom*. Sydney: Association of Independent Schools of NSW.
- Brown, R. (1994). People in need: Challenges and dilemmas. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 18*(2), 3-10.
- Carpenter, S., McKee-Higgins, E. (1996). Behaviour management in inclusive classrooms. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(4), 195-203.
- Cartledge, G., & Johnson, C. (1996). Inclusive classrooms for students emotional and behavioral disorders: Critical variables. *Theory into Practice, 35*(1), 51-65.
- Dickinson, S., Chard, D., & Simmons, D. (2000). An integrated reading/writing curriculum: A focus on scaffolding. *LD Forum, 18*(4), 12-16.
- Ellis, L., & Stormont-Spurgin, M. (1996). *Appropriate collaborative interventions: Working with children with attention-deficit-disorder*. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention, Orlando, Florida.
- Evans, D. (1995). Human diversity and schools: Children with special needs. In N. G. F. Maltby, & D. Berliner (Ed.), *Educational psychology: An Australian and New Zealand perspective*. Brisbane: Wiley.
- Fisher, J., Schumaker, J., Deshler, D. (1995). Searching for validated practices: A review of the literature. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 28*(4), 1-20.
- Forlin, C., & Cole, P. (1994). Attributions of social acceptance and integration for children with mild intellectual disability. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 19*(1), 11-23.
- Gagnon & Maccini, J., & Maccini, P. (2001). Preparing students with disabilities for algebra. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 34*(1), 8-15.
- Good, R., Simmons, D., & Kameenui, E. (2001). The importance and decision-making utility of a continuum of fluency-based indicators of foundational reading skills for third-grade high stakes outcomes. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 5*, 257-288.
- Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1994). *Looking in classrooms* (6th ed.). New York: Harper Collins.
- Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, & Carta, J. (1994).
- Howell, K., & Nolet, V. (2000). *Curriculum-based evaluation: Teaching and decision-making* (3rd ed.): Wadsworth.
- Kavale, K., & Forness, S. (2000). Policy decisions in special education: The role of meta-analysis. In R. Gersten, E. Schiller, & S. Vaughn (Ed.), *Contemporary special education research: Synthesis of the knowledge base on critical instructional issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kinder, D., & Carnine, D. (1991). Direct instruction: What it is and what it is becoming. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 1*(2), 193-213.
- Kings-Sears, M., & Cummins, C. (1996). Inclusive practices of classroom teachers. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(4), 217-225.
- Larkin, M. (2001). Providing support for student independence through scaffolded instruction. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 34*(1), 30-34.

- Leshowitz, B., Jenkins, K., Heaton, S., & Bough, T. (1993). Fostering critical thinking skills in students with learning disabilities: An instruction program. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26*(7), 483-490.
- Maccini, P., & Hughes, C. (2000). Effects of problem-solving strategy on the introductory algebra performance of secondary students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 15*, 10-21.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. (2001). Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement.
- Mittler, P. (1995). Education for all or some? International principles and practice. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 19*(2), 5-15.
- Montague, M., Applegate, B., & Marquard, K. (1993). Cognitive strategy instruction and mathematical problem-solving performance of students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 8*(4), 223-232.
- Munk, D., & Repp, A. (1994). The relationship between instruction variables and problem behavior. *Exceptional Children, 60*(5), 390-401.
- Notari-Syverson, A., Cole, K., Osborn, J., & Sherwood, D. (1996). What is this? What did we just do? How did you do that? *Teaching Exceptional Children, 28*(2), 12-16.
- Ostrosky, M., & Kaiser, A. (1995). The effects of a peer-mediated intervention on the social communicative interactions between children with and without special needs. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 5*(2), 151-171.
- Rosenshine, B. (1995). Advances in research on instruction. *Journal of Educational Research, 88*(5), 262-268.
- Scruggs, T., Mastropieri, M., & Sullivan, G. (1994). Promoting relational thinking: Elaborate interrogation for students with mild disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 60*(5), 450-457.
- Simmons, D., & Kameenui, E. (1996). A focus on curriculum design: When children fail. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 28*(7), 1-16.
- Slavin, R. (1996a). *Co-operative learning: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Slavin, R. (1996b). Neverstreaming: Preventing learning disabilities. *Educational Leadership, 53*(5), 4-7.
- Swanson, H., & Hoskyn, M. (2001). Instructing adolescents with learning disabilities: A component and composite analysis. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 16*(2), 109-119.
- Swanson, H., Hoskyn, M., & Lee, C. (1999). *Interventions for students with learning disabilities: A meta-analysis of treatment outcomes*. New York: Guilford.
- Villa, R., Thousand, J., & Chapple, J. (1996). Preparing teachers to support inclusion: preservice and inservice programs. *Theory into Practice, 35*(1), 42-50.
- Villa, R., Thousand, J., Nevin, A., & Malgeri, C. (1996). Instilling collaboration for inclusive schooling as a way of doing business in public schools. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(3), 169-181.
- Wang, M., & Reynolds, M. (1996). Progressive inclusion: Meeting new challenges in special education. *Theory into Practice, 35*(1), 20-25.
- Warger, C., & Pugach, M. (1996). Curriculum considerations in an inclusive environment. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 28*(8), 1-12.
- Werts, M., Wolery, M., Gast, D., & Holcombe, A. (1996). Sneak in some extra learning by using instructive feedback. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 28*(3), 70-71.
- Westwood, P. (1993). Striving for positive outcomes for students with learning difficulties. *Special education perspectives, 2*(2), 87-94.
- Westwood, P. (1995a). Learner and teacher: Perhaps the most important partnership of all. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 19*(1), 5-16.
- Westwood, P. (1995b). *Current issues in effective teaching and learning*. Paper presented at the Nature of the Learner, Sydney.

- Wolf, M., & Katzir-Cohen, T. (2001). Reading fluency and its intervention. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 5*, 211-239.
- Ysseldyke, J. (2001). Reflections on a research career: Generalizations from 25 years of research on assessment and instructional decision making. *Exceptional Children, 67*, 295-309.
- Ysseldyke, J., & Algozzine, B. (1995). *Special education: A practical approach for teachers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.