

Education planning

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1. Where can I get information about the student's learning strengths and needs?

The quickest way to start learning about the student is to tap into the knowledge of those who already know them. This can include previous teachers, education support staff (integration aides), parents, and other professionals.

If the student is entering prep, you will find important information in their Transition Learning and Development Statement, which is part of the Victorian Government initiative [Transition: A Positive Start to School](#).

It outlines what to expect when participating in local transition-to-school programs and provides a shared understanding between early childhood services and schools about what is important for children and their families during this time.

The initiative also introduces a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development in the form of a [Transition Learning and Development Statement](#).

The DEECD [Sharing Our Journey protocol](#) is another tool to facilitate the transition to school for students who have received Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services in kindergarten.

You can begin to identify the student's learning strengths and needs by reviewing any previous Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and other reports. It is also important to spend time observing the student in your own classroom. You can then build on previous knowledge and effectively contribute to the next ILP. A regularly maintained ILP will help to ensure continuity from year to year.

A transition meeting is a good opportunity to talk with past teachers, education support staff and other relevant people. It is important to find out how subjects are being adapted or modified, particularly core subjects such as maths and English. You can also familiarise yourself with the student's preferred form of communication and previous strategies.

Try to arrange a Student Support Group meeting early in the school year to clarify any issues and parent expectations. If the student is entering Prep, transition and information sharing should be guided by the DEECD [Sharing Our Journey protocol](#).

2. Where can I find information about specific disabilities?

Parents are often a good starting point for information about their child's disability. Don't assume that all children with a particular disability are the same. Even children with the same disability have different strengths and needs.

There are many disability-specific organisations that provide information such as the [Down Syndrome Victoria](#), [Cerebral Palsy Support Network](#) and [Autism Victoria](#).

The [Raising Children Network Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) website includes information about autism spectrum disorders.

The [Better Health Channel](#) website includes general information about disabilities and medical conditions.

The [Bar None Community Awareness Kit for Schools](#) provides information and curriculum support for teachers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of disability.

3. How do I approach teaching a child with a disability?

Remember that the student is a child first, and the disability is secondary. Approach your teaching practice from this perspective and utilise the variety of skills and strategies you already have as a teacher.

Develop or review the existing Individual Learning Plan with the Student Support Group as soon as possible to set out learning goals and teaching strategies. Develop a learning profile of the student using a strength-based approach that expands on what the student can already do and focuses on progress.

Children with a disability may need assistance with certain tasks but it is important that they are active participants in their learning. Adults assisting children with physical and intellectual disabilities need to understand the importance of providing assistance without creating dependence. Parents can often share their insight about how their child progresses with certain tasks and this can help others to develop this understanding.

A positive approach towards including children with a disability can go a long way to determining whether a child is truly included in the school community. Your positive approach can also motivate and inspire confidence in other staff and students to do the same.

4. How do I develop an Individual Learning Plan?

There is no one-size-fits-all design or template for the perfect Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The plan will depend on the needs of the student and must be flexible enough to allow for changes.

Entry (or baseline) skills, goals and strategies should be addressed within the ILP for each learning area where the student requires additional support. Strategies should outline what will be done, by whom and when, what resources are required and how they will be used.

Information provided by professionals including psychologists and speech pathologists can be included in the ILP.

[DEECD sample reports cards](#) using an ILP can be adapted into an Individual Learning Plan template. The ILP should also identify any staff training needs and how these will be addressed. An ILP should be easy to use and understood by all members of the educational team, and updated regularly.

Information for parents about ILPs is included in [Positive Education Planning: Supporting children with a disability in Victorian government mainstream schools](#).

5. How are goals set?

As the teacher, you have responsibility for setting goals in conjunction with the Student Support Group. Goals should be linked to the curriculum wherever possible.

Identify entry level skills through the school's assessment processes and input from parents and other relevant people, such as the previous teacher or early childhood intervention specialist. This establishes the baseline from which to set goals.

Goals should be based on the progress that the student can reasonably expect to achieve rather than a comparison with students of the same age. Set goals that are realistic and achievable but challenging.

Goals must be measurable in order to monitor the student's progress. Goals are more easily measured if they are linked to the [VELS progression points](#) and entry skills have been clearly established.

Goals should be reviewed to monitor and maintain progress, or modified as needed.

6. How do I adapt the environment?

Start planning early with the Student Support Group for any building modifications, such as ramps or accessible toilets, or the purchase of specialised aids or equipment.

Think through how you might set up the classroom to meet the needs of all the students in your class. This may include positioning of furniture, placing materials within a student's reach, using signage, setting up a retreat area or clearing access ways. Consultation with an occupational therapist may also be useful.

The [Teacher Information Booklet in the Bar None Community Awareness Kit for Schools](#) includes some useful information regarding accessible and inclusive classrooms in the Communication section.

7. How do I modify the curriculum?

Teachers regularly make modifications to suit the range of their students' abilities. Curriculum modifications for students with a disability may include modifying the quantity or complexity of the task, or allowing a student to complete the task in a different way from the rest of the class.

Tasks and materials should be age-appropriate, interesting and challenging. Understand the importance of providing assistance without creating dependence. Appropriate support is the minimum assistance required to ensure success.

Choose appropriate teaching strategies to suit the student within the context of the class. Strategies may include individual learning, group learning, peer and cross-age tutoring, and matching intensive teaching with the times of day when students learn best.

Information and tips about inclusive teaching practice is available in [Students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms: a resource for teachers](#), published by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

8. What about specific learning needs?

If the student has specific learning needs that relate to their disability, it may be useful to learn teaching strategies to address these needs.

Seek support from other teachers or specialists at school to learn and implement these strategies. Talk to the school about accessing professional development.

Links

Autism	Autism Help website http://www.autismhelp.info/main.htm Positive Partnerships: supporting school aged students on the autism spectrum project http://www.autismtraining.com.au
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	<p>Delivers two components of the Helping Children with Autism package being implemented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), including a training component for teachers. Interactive learning modules are available on several topics including an introduction to autism, bullying and sexuality.</p>
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD)	<p>British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Education website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/adhd</p> <p>Most of the strategies and modifications are appropriate to try in Australian schools despite some differences in support models.</p>
Behaviour and learning difficulties	<p>Curriculum toolkit – Section 5 www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/CurriculumToolkit2006.pdf</p> <p>British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Education website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/landbdif/toc.htm</p> <p>Most of the strategies and modifications are appropriate to try in Australian schools despite some differences in support models.</p>
Chronic illness	<p>Chronic Illness Alliance http://www.chronicillness.org.au/invisible/</p> <p>Information on acquired brain injury, asthma, cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, epilepsy, haemophilia, hepatitis C, slow transit constipation and thyroid conditions, including 'school strategies' applicable to each of conditions.</p>
Communication and language difficulties	<p>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Language Support Program http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/lsp/default.htm</p> <p>Speech Pathology Australia website http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au</p> <p>Royal Children's Hospital Speech Pathology website http://www.rch.org.au/speech/pubs/index.cfm?doc_id=10459 Includes a list of private speech pathologists.</p> <p>Understanding Auditory Processing Disorders in Children article www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/understand-apd-child.htm</p>
Developmental delay	<p>Developmental delay: An information guide for parents www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/cdr/DevDelay.pdf</p>
Down syndrome	<p>Down Syndrome Victoria http://www.dsav.asn.au/index.html</p> <p>'Learners with Down syndrome – A handbook for Teaching Professionals'. Down Syndrome Victoria also offers an Education</p>

	Support Service http://www.dsav.asn.au/services/ess.html
Hearing impairment	'Are You Being Heard' booklet' www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/are_you_being_heard Published by Deaf Children Australia and aimed at mainstream teachers of deaf and hard of hearing children of all ages.
Intellectual disabilities	British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Education website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/sid/
Learning difficulties	SPELD Victoria http://www.speldvic.org.au Dyslexia SPELD Foundation West Australia website www.dyslexia-speld.com LD Online website http://www.ldonline.org/educators
Physical disabilities	Cerebral palsy: An information guide for parents www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/cdr/CPBooklet.pdf SCOPE School Age Services http://www.scopevic.org.au/therapy_schoolage.html The Cerebral Palsy Education Centre http://www.cpec.org.au Runs workshops for educators working with children with physical disabilities in mainstream classrooms.
Vision impairment	Statewide Vision Resource Centre http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au

9. How do I write a report for a child with a disability?

Individualised reports should be developed for students who have a modified curriculum that does not fit within the standardised A to E reporting framework. Many schools design individual reports around the Individual Learning Plan.

In some areas of the curriculum, student progress can be demonstrated by the inclusion of samples or portfolios with their report. Like the standard A to E report, individualised reports should also include detailed teacher comments.

Remember to celebrate achievements! While progress might be made in small steps, all successes and achievements are worthy of praise and celebration.

[DEECD sample report cards](#) are a good guide for writing reports for students with an ILP.

10. How can I promote positive interactions to include students with a disability?

Children in primary school are often very accepting of children with differences. Positive modelling by adults who have a good knowledge of disability can encourage positive attitudes in others.

The [Bar None Community Awareness Kit for Schools](#) includes a set of curriculum units and activities which aim to assist teachers to increase young people's understanding of disability, increase knowledge, understanding and respect for diversity and difference, and to assist teachers and schools to create welcoming, inclusive classrooms.

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This FAQ information sheet is part of the Inclusive Classroom School Resource published by the Association for Children with a Disability with support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. For more information go to www.acd.org.au/inclusive_classroom

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