

STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP GUIDELINES



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Authorised by the Department of Education and Training,

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education and Training recognises that effective schools have high expectations for all learners, and that all students have the potential to learn. Better outcomes are achieved when the key people within a student's life are included and engaged with planning, supporting and implementing the educational program.

These Student Support Group Guidelines are designed to assist schools in supporting students with disabilities and additional learning needs, and to provide schools with an operational process to support them in meeting their obligations under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

Under section 32 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, education providers must comply with the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The Standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services and the elimination of harassment and victimisation. When planning an adjustment for the student, the school should consult with the parent/guardian/carer(s) and, where appropriate, the student, through the Student Support Group process, about:

- the proposed adjustment and consider issues such as whether the adjustment is reasonable
- the extent to which the adjustment would achieve its intended aim, and
- whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be more suitable.

To maximise opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed, policy and practice within schools should reflect:

- collaboration between teachers and students, parent/guardian/carer(s), education and health professionals to develop agreed understandings and responses to a student's behaviours, needs, communication skills and learning needs
- curriculum-based Personalised Learning and Support Planning informed by a Student Support Group that set out the student's short-term and long-term learning goals based on the Victorian Curriculum, Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) assessments and other relevant information
- teaching and learning strategies that take account of a student's background, experiences, individual personality and individual goals
- opportunities for the student to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours in a range of domains and contexts
- opportunities for all students to participate in classroom activities with other students.

Further information about the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* is available at:

<https://education.gov.au/disability-standards-education>, and

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/legislation.aspx/

Schools have similar obligations under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. Further information about the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 is available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Human_Rights.aspx

1.1 Inclusive Education

The Department is committed to embedding inclusive education in all school environments for students with disabilities and additional needs. All Victorians, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their social or economic status, should have access to high quality education.

For information and resources on **Education for all**, the Department's vision for inclusive education, see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/studentswithdisability.aspx, and

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/Inclusive-education-for-students-with-disabilities.aspx

2 AIMS

The aims of the Student Support Group are to:

- ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for the student, work together to establish shared goals for the student's education
- plan reasonable adjustments for the student to access the curriculum and participate in their education
- provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout the student's school life
- monitor the progress of the student

The Student Support Group makes recommendations to the principal for their consideration and potential implementation

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to achieve these aims it is the responsibility of the Student Support Group to:

- identify the student's needs
- determine any adjustments to be made to the curriculum, teaching and learning
- plan an appropriate educational program
- develop a Personalised Learning and Support Plan
- discuss the plan with teachers and provide support to implement the learning plan
- provide advice to the principal concerning the additional educational and support needs of the student and what may be required to meet these needs
- review and evaluate the student's program once per term, and at other times if requested by any member of the group.

It is essential that a cooperative working relationship is developed and maintained within the Student Support Group and with the school. The Student Support Group represents a partnership in the educational planning process between the parent/guardian/carer(s), the student and the school.

4 MEMBERSHIP

A Student Support Group consists of:

- the parent/guardian/carer(s) of the student;
- a parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate (where chosen by the parent/guardian/carer(s));
- a teacher or teacher(s) nominated as having lead responsibility for the student;
- the principal or nominee (to act as chairperson); and
- the student (where appropriate).

The Student Support Group may invite input from any other person with knowledge of the student or with information relevant to the educational or social needs of the student (Consultants).

The number and choice of the consultants should be agreed to by all members of the Student Support Group. The information provided by the consultants will be for the consideration of the group in decision making. Consultants do not have a role in the final decision making process of the Student Support Group.

Where a student with a disability is attending two schools, the Student Support Group should be convened by the school where the student attends the majority of time. The principal (or nominee) of the other school should also be a member of the Student Support Group.

Where a student is being assessed through the Year 6-7 Review process, the secondary school in which the student anticipates enrolling should be invited to join the Student Support Group.

4.1 Principal

When a parent/guardian/carer seeks to enrol a child with a disability into a school, the principal should provide them with information about specific support available to facilitate the student's participation in the school's education program.

It is the responsibility of the principal to facilitate the collaborative processes of the Student Support Group by offering support to all members and ensuring their participation. For this to occur, the principal may enlist the support of an interpreter, advocate or other organisations providing support (where appropriate).

The principal or principal's nominee shall convene and chair Student Support Group meetings on a regular basis, at least once per term. The principal ensures that accurate records of the Student Support Group meetings are kept and provided to all members.

4.2 Classroom Teacher/ Year Level Coordinator

The classroom teacher will provide the Student Support Group with current information regarding the student's progress and assist in determining future educational goals.

It is the classroom teacher's responsibility to ensure that the student has access to the school's educational programs and implements the classroom content of Learning and Support Plans. Other staff working with the student do so under the direction of a nominated classroom teacher.

4.3 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)

Parent/guardian/carer(s) play a vital role in the Student Support Group. They have a holistic understanding of the child and provide ongoing involvement in their education. Parent/guardian/carer(s) are often in the best position to provide information on the effectiveness and practicality of particular strategies and programs. They provide knowledge and experience of previous events that may influence programming decisions. Parent/guardian/carer(s) are able to contribute to the goals and strategies that will support the education of their child, including their transition to further education, training and employment.

4.4 Student

Where appropriate the student should be part of the program development process. In some cases, the student's age or severity of disability may restrict direct participation. However, in all cases, the preferences and interests of the student, regardless of how they are expressed, should be actively considered when planning programs

4.5 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)' Advocate

A parent/guardian/carer may be accompanied and supported by an advocate to assist their full participation in planning and supporting the student's program and in making decisions about the student.

The role of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate in the Student Support Group is a constructive, supportive and enabling one.

It may include:

- encouraging the sharing of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' knowledge, skills and perceptions about the student with the Student Support Group
- discussing any difficulties or uncertainties being experienced by the parent/guardian/carer(s) in participating in the Student Support Group
- assisting the development of a co-operative and collaborative working relationship between the parent/guardian/carer(s) and the school community
- assisting the parent/guardian/carer(s) to understand Department of Education and Training procedures
- linking the parent/guardian/carer(s) with relevant services and organisations.

It is the right of the parent/guardian/ carer(s) to have an advocate. If they wish, a parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate may be a friend, supportive community member, a member of the family or formal advocate. The advocate is not to be in receipt of a fee.

See the Program for Students with Disabilities: Guidelines for Schools for a list of organisations that provide parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocates. |

4.6 Interpreter

Where necessary, an interpreter (in languages other than English including Auslan) should be present at the Student Support Group meetings. Interpreters are not members of the Student Support Group. The principal will assist in obtaining the services of an interpreter. For further information on accessing interpreting and translation services see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/interpreting.aspx

4.7 Consultants

The Student Support Group should ensure that input is obtained from other personnel who have relevant expertise and/or information to:

- assist in the establishment of teaching and learning goals for the student
- provide support in the development of teaching and learning programs
- help determine appropriate strategies to implement agreed teaching and learning programs.

The Department of Education and Training provides Student Support Services Officers, a group of professionals who provide support to students and schools. Their role is to enhance school capacity to improve student outcomes, provide continuity of care to all students, and assist in the development of Personalised Learning and Support Plans and the defining of appropriate curriculum support.

Student Support Services Officers include:

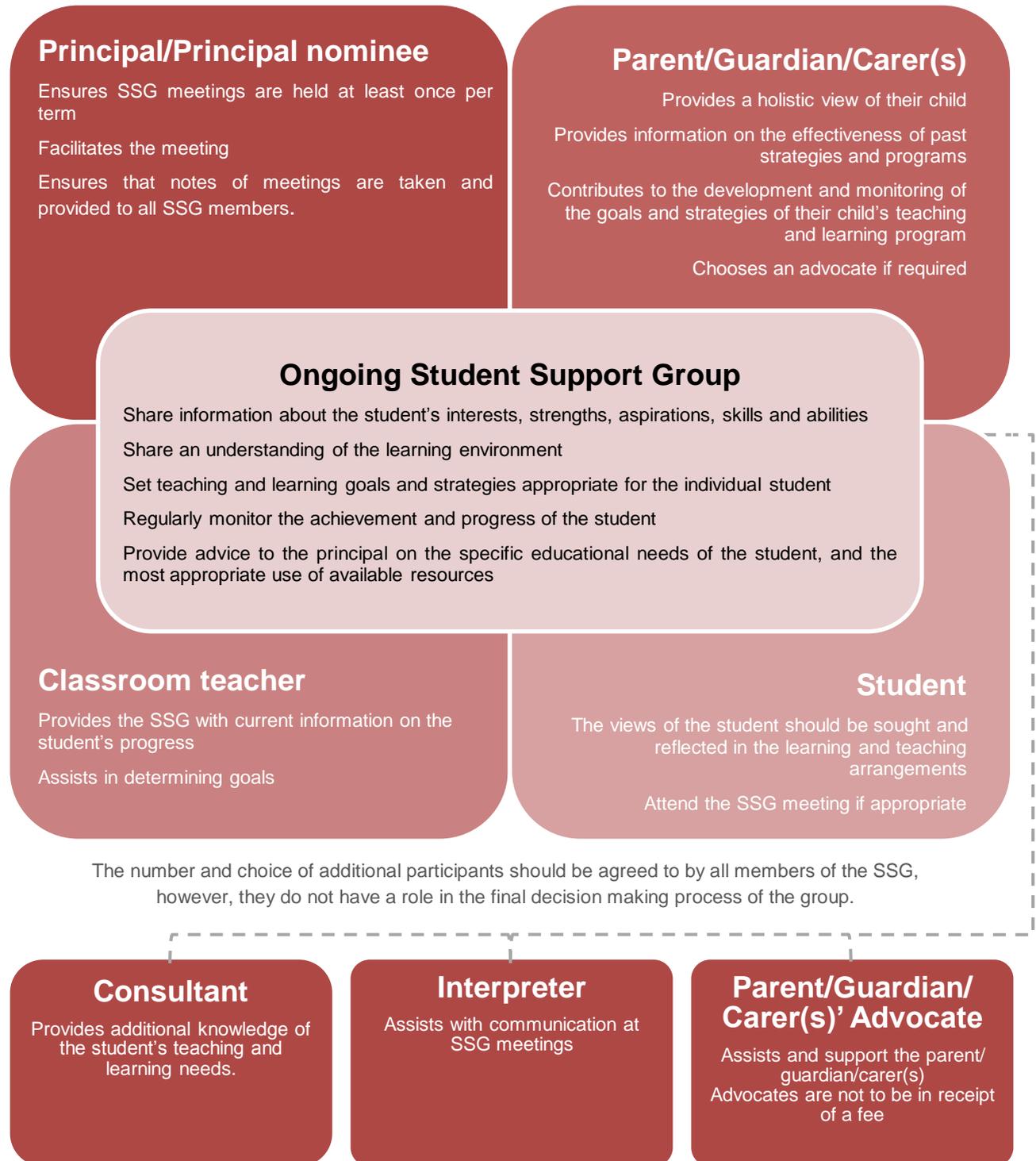
- psychologists
- social workers
- speech pathologists

In addition, persons who could make a valuable contribution to the Student Support Group include:

- Department of Human Services staff
- special needs teachers
- learning area or year level coordinators
- medical and paramedical practitioners treating the student
- preschool teachers and/or advisers and/or early intervention staff
- special education consultants
- specialist school staff
- student welfare coordinators
- education support staff
- primary welfare officers
- careers practitioner/coordinator
- teachers who have taught the student previously and/or other members of staff
- visiting teachers (for visually, hearing and physically impaired students).

Schools are advised to work closely together to make the best use of the available resources and expertise within the local area, for example, the establishment of ongoing links between mainstream and specialist schools

4.8 Roles/Responsibilities of the Student Support Group



5 OPERATION

A Student Support Group is mandatory for students in the Program for Students with Disabilities, and strongly encouraged for any students with additional learning needs.

Information about the Program for Students with Disabilities is available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psd.asp>

The principal will ensure the parent/guardian/carer(s) have access to these guidelines, the Program for Students with Disabilities guidelines, and related school policy documents concerning the education of students with disabilities. This will assist the parent/guardian/carer(s) to participate fully in the process.

5.1 Meetings

Sufficient time must be allowed for the Student Support Group participants to prepare before meetings are convened, including time for the parent/guardian/carer(s) and the parent/guardian/carer(s)'s advocate to meet. Meetings should be arranged at times that enable all members to be present.

Student Support Group meetings should be convened on a regular basis (at least once per term) and as soon as practicable following a request by a Student Support Group member.

The principal needs to ensure that efficient and effective meeting arrangements are in place. See page 18-19 for examples.

5.2 Concerns

Concerns regarding the process used by the Student Support Group or the management of resources by the school should be resolved, if possible, with the principal. If the issue(s) cannot be resolved at the school level, the concern should be forwarded in writing to the school's Regional Director. For Regional contact details see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx

For information on the Department's policy and guidelines regarding complaints, see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx

6 PERSONALISED LEARNING AND SUPPORT PLANNING

The focus of the Student Support Group is on educational planning and monitoring of a student's progress. This planning process will enable schools to facilitate quality learning outcomes for every student with a disability. To best support the educational outcomes of students with disabilities and additional learning needs the Student Support Group is advised to use the following sequence.

6.1 Identifying the student's strengths and needs

Sharing an understanding of the student as a learner

Parent/guardian/carer(s) and teachers are committed to the best educational outcomes for the student and will have information to exchange concerning the student and the learning process. Parent/guardian/carer(s) bring information about the student's skills, teaching methods that have been successful and important background information. Teachers bring expertise in designing and delivering a teaching and learning program. Consultants who have an understanding and knowledge of the student as a learner may enhance the information sharing process. The purpose of information sharing is to bring together understandings and relevant information, and identify the implications for the student's program. Shared information will form the foundation for deciding what to teach, how and when to teach, and how to deliver the most effective teaching and learning program to maximise outcomes for the student. It will also help provide the basis for further assessment.

Student aspirations, strengths, skills and abilities

Through direct observation and assessment the parent/guardian/carer(s), teachers and other relevant personnel can identify the student's interests, aspirations, strengths, skills and abilities. The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework (the Framework) could be used to support this process. The Framework is an online resource that is based on a developmental continuum of learning that supports the work of teachers, trainers and careers practitioners in the preparation of young people to make a successful transition into further education, training or employment. For further information about the Framework please see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/carframe/Pages/framework.aspx

Understanding the learning environment

The Student Support Group will need to consider the school environment. This may include the layout of the school, location and accessibility of: classrooms; toilets and; playground. Equipment requirements for a student with specific physical needs, for example seating or tables, should be ordered early to ensure they are available when the student commences school. Consideration may also need to be given to the acoustic environment, noise levels and lighting.

Victorian legislation requires that instruction in the standard curriculum program must be provided free to all students in Victorian government schools. Free instruction includes the provision of learning and teaching activities, instructional supports, materials and resources, and administration and facilities associated with the standard curriculum program.

The costs associated with the administration and coordination of the standard curriculum program is considered to be part of free instruction and must not be passed onto parents. The legislation provides that a parent of a student with a disability or impairment is not required to contribute to the cost of the provision of additional support for the education of that student. Further information about parent payments is available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx

Template 1 may assist schools to gather and analyse relevant information to develop a profile of the student as a learner.

TEMPLATE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT

Sharing existing information

Relevant activities & environments	Aspirations, strengths, skills & successes	Most effective teaching strategy
Home		
School		
Recreation		

6.2 Determining adjustments that need to be made to the curriculum

Focusing on planning

The primary focus for all students is preparation for future education and training, employment, or other aspirations. When planning for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, it is especially important to maintain a focus on the student taking an active role in the community in the future. It is essential to incorporate this focus in planning the immediate program.

Setting teaching and learning goals

The Student Support Group considers the student's future aspirations and sets long and short term educational goals. The important aims when setting teaching and learning goals are to:

ensure that all parties are in agreement with the goals

- ensure the goals are a priority for the student
- build on the strengths and skills of the student
- understand the difference between long and short term goals
- ensure the implementation of all actions to achieve goals is monitored.

Long term (annual) goals

Long term (annual) goals are specific statements describing the expected behaviour or skill to be achieved by the end of the school year. Long term goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

Short term goals

Short term goals are developed by identifying the sub-skills that are required for a student to achieve a long term (annual) goal. Short term goals specify what is to be achieved in periods ranging from a week through to a semester. They also need to be specific. Short term goals are set/reviewed at each Student Support Group meeting.

Setting goals appropriate for individual students

All goals for students with disabilities and additional learning needs should be:

- designed to ensure the participation of the student within their classroom programs
- based on curriculum content and experiences similar to those for same-age peers
- The Student Support Group should set short and long term goals that:
- enable the student to undertake a meaningful educational program
- are realistic, achievable and described in a manner that makes it possible to measure the extent of the student's progress
- describe the expected learning outcomes for a student at the end of the school year and can be measured against the Victorian Curriculum, ranging from Level A to Level 10
- describe the actual performance expected at the end of the year, and the level of performance the student should exhibit to show successful achievement of the goal
- enable the school to effectively report the academic progress of students with disabilities in a similar manner to reporting the learning of all other students in the school.

In ongoing planning for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, critical transition stages (including preschool to primary school, primary to secondary and secondary to post-school options) are linked to specific goals. Careful planning for these times is also necessary.

Template 2 may assist schools to identify information that will support the development of educational goals.

TEMPLATE 2: GOAL SETTING

Long term (annual) goals

By the end of this year	
Achievement	
Participation	
Access	

Short term goals – specific, measurable, achievable

By the end of this term / semester	
Achievement	
Participation	
Access	

Career Action Plans

An important element of the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework is the Career Action Plan. Career Action Plans reflect a student's increased learning, building on previous planning and identified future actions. Goal setting activities are included in a student's Career Action Plan. Support for targeted groups, including Guidelines and customised Career Action Plans for young people with disabilities, are available on the Framework website.

Career Action Plans should complement, not replace, Personalised Learning and Support Planning. To ensure consistency between planning documents, it is recommended that careers practitioners, teachers and trainers work with members of the Student Support Group on the goal setting component of the Learning Plan. For further information about the Framework please see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/carframe/Pages/cap.aspx

6.3 Planning and implementing Personalised Learning and Support

Deciding what needs to be taught

The Student Support Group is encouraged to utilise resources available on the Student Learning and Student Wellbeing and Engagement websites. Further advice is also available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/default.aspx

It is important that content taught to students with disabilities and additional learning needs is related to what the rest of the class is learning. Choice of activities should reflect the individual needs of the student. The activities should be comprehensive and balanced. It is important that activities are age appropriate, relevant and functional. A sufficiently broad repertoire of activities should be selected to permit student choice of activity.

Selecting priorities for the content to be taught

Students with disabilities and additional learning needs may learn at differing rates from their peers. It is vital that maximum teaching time is spent on identified priorities.

Activities given greatest priority need to be those that build on and extend the strengths of the student and form the foundation for later more complex tasks.

6.4 Recording Achievement

All students, including students with disabilities, should be assessed against the Victorian Curriculum. The Victorian Curriculum provides a set of prescribed content and common achievement standards across Levels A to 10.

For students with a Student Support Group, achievement information in the Victorian Curriculum should be established and recorded (see Template 3) to inform personalised learning planning.

6.5 Abilities Based Learning and Education Support

Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) resources can provide substantial information and advice to the Student Support Group. ABLES resources can inform the development of a Learning Plan for students with disabilities working within A to D (Towards Foundation Level in the Victorian Curriculum).

For further information about ABLES see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/ables.aspx

Template 3 will assist schools after they have completed the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) assessments to develop an ABLES and Victorian Curriculum Learning Plan

TEMPLATE 3: RECORDING ACHIEVEMENT

ABLES and Victorian Curriculum Learning Planning

School		Long Term Goals
Student		[List long term goals agreed by SSG here]
Teacher		
Victorian Curriculum Domain		
Review Date		
Level		

Goal: [Insert Victorian Curriculum Domain] [Insert Victorian Curriculum level]		
Focus: [provide a focus statement here]		
Entry Skills	Outcome Target	Teaching and learning strategies
[List the skills the student has already consolidated]	[List the outcomes the teacher is working with the student to achieve]	[Identify relevant teaching and learning strategies that may be used to achieve the outcomes sought]

Goal: [Insert Victorian Curriculum Domain] [Insert Victorian Curriculum level]		
Focus: [provide a focus statement here]		
Entry Skills	Outcome Target	Teaching and learning strategies
[List the skills the student has already consolidated]	[List the outcomes the teacher is working with the student to achieve]	[Identify relevant teaching and learning strategies that may be used to achieve the outcomes sought]

Goal: [Insert Victorian Curriculum Domain] [Insert Victorian Curriculum level]		
Focus: [provide a focus statement here]		
Entry Skills	Outcome Target	Teaching and learning strategies
[List the skills the student has already consolidated]	[List the outcomes the teacher is working with the student to achieve]	[Identify relevant teaching and learning strategies that may be used to achieve the outcomes sought]

Goal: [Insert Victorian Curriculum Domain] [Insert Victorian Curriculum level]		
Focus: [provide a focus statement here]		
Entry Skills	Outcome Target	Teaching and learning strategies
[List the skills the student has already consolidated]	[List the outcomes the teacher is working with the student to achieve]	[Identify relevant teaching and learning strategies that may be used to achieve the outcomes sought]

Comments

Determining organisational strategies

Organisational strategies need to address the questions of when, where, by whom and with whom the curriculum is to be delivered. For example, the appropriateness of the environment for the student's learning, the amount of time necessary to teach an activity and the amount of time required for practice will need to be considered.

Other factors such as the need for intensive teaching times to coincide with the times of day when the student learns best, and maximising the time spent in active student engagement, also need to be considered.

Flexible groupings of students within classrooms will allow for a variety of learning groups for students. Programs for students with disabilities and additional learning needs may include individual learning, small group learning, peer and cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning arrangements consistent with those used for other class members.

Organisational strategies will also need to be flexible. Team-teaching is to be encouraged as is the sharing of resources between schools, including local specialist schools.

Additional support may be provided by Student Support Service Officers.

6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Developing evaluation and review procedures

Schools are required to measure, rate and report the achievement and progress of each and every student. The evaluation/ monitoring/review phase of the planning sequence for students with disabilities and additional learning needs is critical. Evaluation enables progress to be measured, the effectiveness of the program to be assessed and new goals to be developed. It is important that the teaching and learning plans for students with disabilities are constantly monitored so that they are responsive to the changing needs and educational progress of the student, and can be adjusted accordingly.

Template 4 can support schools to monitor the current progress of the student at the same time as mapping the future learning opportunities for the student.

7 TRANSITION TO POST-SCHOOL OPTIONS

A student's final years of school require a planned progression into participation in adult and community life through further education, training or employment. This is the fundamental goal of the Student Support Group.

In order to establish a range of options, transitions should be part of the whole-school approach to career development from Year 7 to Year 12 so that students, parents/ guardians/carer(s) and teachers have explored choices and feel comfortable about the decisions to be made from an early age. Transition planning should encompass three major areas of adult life – education and training, employment, and independent living.

Successful transition planning is based on a partnership between parent/guardian/ carer(s) and school, and involves considering the current abilities of the student, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours a student will need to operate successfully in the post-school environment, and the provision of appropriate strategies to ensure the needed skills are developed.

By establishing appropriate linkages to service providers such as Workplace Learning Coordinators, employment placement officers or higher education disability liaison officers, and inviting representatives to Student Support Group meetings, agencies can increasingly become part of the planning process. This ensures a seamless transition to the most appropriate post-school option.

The Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiative ensures that all students aged 15 years and over (Years 10-12) in Victorian government schools (including students with disabilities in both mainstream and specialist schools) are provided with an individual Career Action Plan and associated support as a means to make a successful transition through the senior years of education, to further education, training or employment. Additional support must also be provided to young people at risk of disengaging or not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

For further information please see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Pages/mips.aspx

In addition, Strengthened Pathways Planning Guidelines provide advice for school staff on careers and transition planning for young people with disabilities, and brings together information about Strengthened Pathways Planning in schools, and the broad range of options available to them when they leave school.

For further information please see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Pages/disabilitypathways.aspx

8 STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP SAMPLES

SAMPLE 1

Student Support Group Meeting Agenda

Date of meeting / /

Members of Student Support Group

- Parent/guardian/carer(s)
- School Staff
- Student Support Services Officers
- Others

Understanding the student

Information presented:

- Parent report
- Medical/Professional reports
- Current/previous school progress
- Current/previous Career Action Plan
- Other agencies

Student characteristics:

- Interests
- Strengths
- Aspirations
- Values
- Skills
- Extracurricular activities

Goal setting

Long term/annual planning:

- Expectations of parents/student
- Expectations of School
- Transition Post Primary/Post-Secondary options
- Post-school aspirations

Short term planning:

- Curriculum Areas (Victorian Curriculum)
- Current achievement
- ABLES/Victorian Curriculum
- Specific Strategies
- Dissemination of information

Program planning:

- Curriculum priorities
- Special considerations

Implementation:

- Staff roles
- Time lines
- Family
- Environmental changes required

Evaluation and monitoring:

- Record keeping
- Progressive assessments/reports
- Measurement of goal attainment

SAMPLE 2

Educational Programming for Students with Disabilities and Additional Learning Needs

Gather information (as much as possible):

- from previous school
- centres attended
- family
- other agencies
- student's interests, aspirations, strengths, values and skills

Long-term goals

- expectations of parents
- expectations of student
- expectations of school
- transition to school
- transition to secondary school
- transition to post-school options

Short-term goals

- individualised program

Implementing strategies

- adjust curriculum to individual needs
- flexible approach to time-tabling of the program
- keeping staff informed

Evaluation and monitoring

- regular briefings with coordinators/teachers/student
- weekly meeting with teachers/education support staff/student
- record keeping
- progress reports regularly from teachers
- support group meetings/feedback from home