Accessing School Curriculum: Implications for Teachers in an Era of the Australian Curriculum

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'The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the course or program is designed in such a way that the student is, or any student with disability is, able to participate in the learning experiences (including the assessment and certification requirements) of the course or program, and any relevant supplementary course or program, on the same basis as a student without a disability, and without experiencing discrimination'
Flowchart - Using the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students

Teachers refer to the Australian Curriculum learning area content that aligns with their students' chronological age as the starting point in planning teaching and learning programs.

Teachers take account of the range of their students' current levels of learning, strengths, goals and interests and personalise learning where necessary through adjustments to the teaching and learning program, according to individual learning need, by:

- drawing from learning area content at different levels along the Foundation to Year 10 sequence
- using the general capabilities and/or cross-curriculum priorities to adjust the learning focus of the age-equivalent learning area content
- aligning individual learning goals with age-equivalent learning area content.

Teachers assess students' progress through the Australian Curriculum in relation to achievement standards. Some students' progress will be assessed in relation to their individual learning goals. Approaches to assessment and reporting will differ across the states and territories.
Findings

- ‘Despite implementation of the education standards, access, equity, and entitlement to an education is still a significant issue for children, young people and adults to education’ (p.24)

Recommendations

- Australia conducts major research into the effectiveness of current education inclusion policies and extend to which Disability Standards in Education are being implemented in each state and territory. (p.24)
Implications in an Era of the Australian Curriculum

Research Questions

- What is ‘access’?
  - How do students with disabilities receive access to the curriculum in Australian schools?
  - How are the requirements from the Australian Curriculum (2012) and the DSE (2005) interpreted?
  - What are the attitudes of teachers to providing access?
What is Access to the Curriculum

Ryndack, Moore, Orlando and Delano (2008-2009)

Components of Access to the general curriculum

› Context
› Content
› High expectations
› Accountability measures
## Access in Australia

### Students with disabilities are provided access to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Type</th>
<th>Access Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Curriculum</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Board of Studies K-6 Syllabus</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teachers have participated in professional development:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development Area</th>
<th>Participation Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relating to the Disability Discrimination Act and associated standards</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In curriculum, planning and assessment for students with disabilities</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In meeting the functional needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not participated in any training or professional development</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support

› Support is given through general educators (42%) or general education/teachers aides (38%)

› Support would like to be shared between general educators and special education teachers (57%)

Adjustments

› Most common instructional adjustments are scaffolding student learning (65%) and explicit instruction (60%)

› Most common environment adjustment is use of support personal (62%)

Barriers

› Funding is the major barrier of access (65%)
I begin planning for students with disabilities through:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selecting outcomes and content that aligns to student’s chronological age</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making adjustments to outcomes and content that aligns to student's chronological age</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching student's individual needs with outcomes from an earlier stage</td>
<td>51%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- 54% did not agree with commencing planning with content that aligns with student’s chronological age.
- 56% of respondents thought it was more beneficial for students to achieve outcomes from an earlier stage than stage appropriate contents.
- However, 39% believe that exposure to age appropriate curriculum content was a key expectation for students with disabilities.
Qualitative discussion

› The wording I have difficulty is 'on the same basis'. It will be modified, not the same.

› A child with challenging behaviours interrupts the learning of others and takes the focus away from the curriculum. It makes the learning environment more stressful for everyone.

› My heart wants to do the best for the student, but the practical challenges - and the potentially negative impact on the learning of my other students - are a cause for concern. Specialist teaching and resource support are critical.

› Funding is not enough to support the student, the other students or myself.
Where to next?

› Exciting opportunities with the Australian curriculum
› Necessity for professional learning
› Need to demystify ‘Access’

‘All Students are entitled to a rigorous, relevant and engaging learning program drawn from a challenging curriculum’

(ACARA, p. 4)