



Student Diversity

How does the Australian Curriculum recognise the Diversity of learners?

The Australian Curriculum promotes excellence and equity in education.

The Australian Curriculum is based on the assumptions that each student can learn and that the needs of every student are important. It enables high expectations to be set for each student as teachers account for the current levels of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop.

Australian students have multiple, diverse, and changing needs that are shaped by individual learning histories and abilities as well as personal, cultural and language backgrounds and socio-economic factors.

A student diversity position paper will soon be available to demonstrate ACARA's intention that the Australian Curriculum will be used by teachers to engage all young Australians.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is working with state and territory education authorities to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and will produce advice about using the curriculum. Additional material about using the curriculum to develop rigorous engaging learning programs that are inclusive of the diverse students in Australian classrooms is being provided to school and curriculum authorities for their use.

Students with English as an additional language or dialect

Many students in Australian schools are learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). Learners of EAL/D are students whose first language is a language other than Standard Australian English and who require additional support to assist them to develop English language proficiency. While many EAL/D students do well in school, there is a significant number who leave school without achieving their potential.

EAL/D students come from diverse backgrounds and may include:

- Overseas and Australian-born students whose first language is a language other than English.
- Students whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language including creoles and related varieties, or Aboriginal English.

EAL/D students enter Australian schools at different ages and at different stages of English language learning and have various educational backgrounds in their first languages. For some, school is the only place they use English.

The aims of the Australian Curriculum are ultimately the same for all students. However, EAL/D students are simultaneously learning a new language and the knowledge, understanding and skills of the curriculum through that new language. They require additional time and support, along with informed teaching that explicitly addresses their language needs, and assessments that take into account their developing language proficiency.

Schools and state and territory education authorities already have in place policies and strategies to support teachers to ensure these students reach their full potential.

ACARA has developed the English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource to support teachers of all learning areas to make content in the Australian Curriculum accessible to all EAL/D students. This resource includes:

- an overview of the characteristics of students learning EAL/D and their particular needs
- an EAL/D learning progression
- advice for teachers regarding linguistic and cultural considerations and teaching strategies
- a glossary.

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Additional resources are being developed for publication late in 2011 including:

- student work that illustrates aspects of the EAL/D learning perspectives
- annotations to content descriptions, describing linguistic and cultural considerations and suggested teaching strategies.

Students with Disability

ACARA is committed to the development of high-quality curriculum for all, while understanding the diverse and complex nature of students with disability. ACARA acknowledges the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005), and its obligation as an education and training service provider to articulate the rights of students with disability to access, participate and achieve in the curriculum on the same basis as students without disability.

The Australian Curriculum is shaped by the propositions that each student can learn and that the needs of every student are important. The curriculum enables teachers to plan rigorous, relevant and engaging learning and assessment experiences for students with disability.

The Australian Curriculum sets out the sequence of learning typically expected across the years of schooling from Foundation to Year 10. It also defines key indicators of learning development and progress through the content descriptions. The achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and able to do. Teachers use the achievement standards to locate their students' current levels of achievement on the Australian Curriculum continuum of learning and then use the curriculum flexibly to plan programs that take account of the different abilities of all students.

Students with disability can engage with the curriculum provided appropriate adjustments are made by teachers and schools in relation to:

- content - what a student learns
- process - how the student learns and instructional processes
- product - how the student demonstrates what they have learned.

For students with disability progressing to the Foundation level of achievement, ACARA has developed draft Australian Curriculum materials in English and Mathematics that describe knowledge, skills and understanding at each of four phases of learning. This draft curriculum has been designed to assist teachers to identify and build on students' current knowledge, understanding and skills on a continuum of learning that follows the same design and structure of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum (please go to www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/faqs.html for details of frequently asked questions).

To participate in consultation on the progressing to Foundation curriculum for English and mathematics, please go to: www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/consultation.

Survey responses can be submitted until 1 November 2011.

ACARA is also preparing further advice which demonstrates how teachers can use the Australian Curriculum flexibly with students with disability across the Foundation to Year 10 learning continuum. Designed to assist teachers in planning learning programs, this advice will include illustrative annotated examples of students' work. Advice and materials will be published on the ACARA website in December 2011 at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

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As part of the development of the next learning areas of the Australian Curriculum (Geography, The Arts and Languages), ACARA will be working with teachers of students with disability to test out the useability of each of the draft curricula and to gather examples of students' work for publication. Feedback from these activities will be used to inform revisions of the draft curriculum for each of these learning areas.

Further advice about using the curriculum with students with disability, please go to www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/student_disability.html