Maximizing Learner Potential
A Policy on Curriculum Differentiation and Personalized Learning at Scott Creek Primary School

Purpose of the Policy
- Provision of appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and educational pathways (accommodations) that support all students to achieve their academic, personal and social potential.

Context
Related documents which support these intentions:
- National Professional Standards for Teachers
- SA Strategic Plan: Every Chance for Every Child
- The Australian Curriculum
- Teaching For Effective Learning (TfEL)
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Students with Disabilities Policy DECD
- Gifted and Talented Children and Students DECD

Principles
- All learners have the right to equitable education programs, which meet their specific learning needs and abilities. (social, emotional, academic, physical)
- Education must be informed by research based practice and ongoing evaluation and improvement.
- Partnerships and shared responsibility with parents/carers, school and regional support services.

Key Understandings
- All learners need a rich learning environment that fosters wellbeing and learning outcomes consistent with their zone of proximal development.
- The learning environment needs to provide educational pathways and appropriate support, challenge, enrichment, extension, and acceleration (where appropriate) for all children.
- Different levels of intellectual potential and ability (across the learning spectrum), require different types of educational provision.
- Student potential may not always be obvious, visible or easily identified. It may be masked by a learning disability or difficulty, cultural background, gender, circumstance or level of motivation.
- Many students underachieve and may be out of sync socially and emotionally with age peers.
- While all students are encouraged to contribute to their school community, G&T students and students with learning disabilities and difficulties especially are at significant risk of underachieving and not completing secondary school unless appropriate curriculum accommodations are made to support and challenge their needs and abilities.
- Identification of special learning needs are crucial to the provision of appropriate accommodations to enable learning to occur in the zone of proximal development.
• Multiple criteria, reliable and valid assessment tools and strategies will be used including:
  o Regional Educational Psychologist testing regimes to identify learning disabilities and high intellectual potential
  o Private educational psychology assessments which confirm giftedness, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, auditory processing disorder and other special needs
  o Current and reliable research on learning needs and methodologies that support special learners
  o Parent and teacher reports, observation data and checklists
  o Student interest inventories and self reports

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The zone of proximal development is a concept created by seminal psychologist, Lev Vygotsky.

According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978)

In other words, it is the range of abilities that a person can perform with assistance (scaffolding), but cannot yet perform independently.

Creating challenge is the most effective method to place students in their ZPD.

Range on the Classroom Learning Spectrum

In any classroom there is a wide range of learners and a wide range of learner needs that teachers take into account in their planning, teaching and assessing. There is a responsibility to make adjustments for students with differing abilities to enable all students to access, engage with and be challenged by the curriculum, achieve curriculum outcomes and participate in the life of the school. Social/emotional learning and maturity presents as a wide range on the spectrum.

Differentiation of the Curriculum - Enabling all Students appropriate access

• A differentiated curriculum caters for a wide range of learning styles and ability levels within a mainstream class. (Wave One)
• Assessment for learning strategies and the TfEL framework outline strategies to support teachers in designing and personalizing learning.
• The General Capabilities (Australian Curriculum) provide a planning framework to encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions (literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), thinking, creativity, teamwork and communication), that, together with curriculum content in each learning area will assist students to live and work successfully. They describe individuals who can manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, become citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels.
• The ‘Play is the Way’ program describes themes for the development of social skills, supported by Restorative Practices for behaviour development encouraging personal responsibility for choices.
Key elements in curriculum differentiation include altering the PACE (progress through the curriculum), LEVEL (support or challenge), GROUPINGS (flexible grouping strategies and vertical classes), ASSESSMENT (pre-assessment and diagnostic. Evidence of learning) (Wave one or Two)

- These apply to all students including mainstream learners, students with high intellectual potential and students with learning disabilities and difficulties.

- Use of higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Good for challenging all learners.
  - Bloom’s Taxonomy
  - Gardner's Multiple Intelligences framework
  - Creative Problem solving
  - Parallel Curriculum strategies
  - Open ended tasks
  - Inquiry and project based learning
  - Using a range of opportunities and ways to demonstrate learning
  - Goal setting
  - Linking learning to real world purposes
  - Peer and self assessment
  - Collaborative learning
  - Critical thinking
  - Access to ICT and learning technologies

Wave one, two and three interventions

- **Wave One**: Deliberate action taken to ensure that all students have the chance to participate productively in the general classroom curriculum.

- **Wave Two**: Performance and other evidence is used to identify those students unable to achieve the goals of the general classroom curriculum or those who exceed these goals, who need special assistance, additional scaffolding or differentiated support in the classroom.

- **Wave 3**: This action drill deeper into performance and other evidence to identify students with specific needs who require highly focused individualized intervention. These students will have a One Plan, which identifies their specific needs. (see below)

Special Learning Pathways

- Literacy and numeracy wave three interventions:
  - Multilit
  - Quicksmart
- Individual and small group support (wave two or three)
- Assistive technology
- Extension and enrichment opportunities (wave two or three)
  - Cluster for like ability mentoring
  - Extra curricula programs: SAPSASA, Festival Choir and orchestra, SRC, instrumental music, band and ensemble, ICAS academic competitions, Tournament of Minds, Oliphant Science Awards, Sustainability Forum, peer mediators, action groups, student initiated interest groups, Readers Cup, Pedal Prix, Cooking Fresh and Local, Inspire Mentoring program, chess, First Lego League, PRC and PBA, creARTive. (These activities/initiatives assist students to discover their talents and interests and to enrich their classroom experiences)
- Depth studies on areas of interest
- Student initiated learning
- Using digital literacies (eg digital storytelling)
• Acceleration through
  o Year level acceleration (if appropriate)
  o Vertically grouped classes
  o Subject acceleration

One Plans (Wave 3)
• Students with additional needs in reaching their potential or working in their ZPD beyond wave 2, will have a One Plan, collaboratively developed with the educators, the learner (where appropriate), parents/carers and other relevant professionals.
• Generally, the One Plan is to support learners identified with special needs through an educational assessment for G&T, learning disabilities, or both. Social, emotional and behavioural needs may also be added to One Plans to address specific needs.
• These students require, and have the right to, provisions beyond those offered in the differentiated classroom.
• G&T students will devise a set of personal goals related to their learning potential. The student, parents/carers and class teacher are involved in this process. The student is mentored regularly by the class teacher to evaluate progress, and develop strategies for effective implementation of the goals.

Intentions

At Scott Creek Primary, we aim to support the complex task of developing the potential of all students.
We aim to do this by:
• Providing appropriate resources (financial, physical, personnel) to meet the special needs of our students.
• Undertaking professional learning to enhance SHIP as well as special education teaching practices (including Dyslexia, Autism and Auditory Processing Disorder).
• Becoming familiar with current research, characteristics of and methods of identifying students with additional learning needs, including those of gifted learners and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
• Critically reflecting on teaching practices with the aim of continual improvement.
• Having high expectations of all students.
• Providing classroom environments which encourage creative, divergent and higher-level thinking and an open-ended approach to learning that will foster student engagement.
• Providing differentiated curriculum, challenging and supportive learning opportunities through modifications to content, process or product.
• Communicating and liaising with parents/carers and appropriate education and support services for the provision of appropriate curriculum accommodations.
• Reporting outcomes through the lens of special accommodations if appropriate.
• Providing information to the school community to support the understanding of students with additional needs reaching their potential.
• Regularly monitoring student progress towards working in their zone of proximal development through Afl and other assessment strategies.
• Developing collaborations beyond the school setting to access expertise, support and resources (eg Autism Association, volunteers, mentors)
• Adopting appropriate structures to assist classroom behavior development and student responsibility for their own learning.
Teaching and Learning Strategies

- Teaching and learning strategies include:
  - empowering students with learning intentions and success criteria
  - explicit teaching
  - giving opportunities for students to initiate discussion and to think creatively and critically
  - harnessing the value of peer teaching, peer and self assessment opportunities
  - guiding students through a range of problem-solving processes
  - posing open-ended questions, activities and assignments
  - using group work, to allow scope for leadership, cooperative decision making and student initiated perspectives
  - encouraging individual research and inquiry
  - involving community members with specific expertise as mentors
  - introducing individualised or group enrichment/extension programs
  - harnessing the use of ICT and personal learning devices
  - Restorative Practices, circle time and student voice to address social and emotional learning.

Appendices

Learning disabilities

Learning disabilities is a term used for learners with average or above intelligence who exhibit developmental and academic skills that are significantly below expectation for their age and general ability.

Examples may include Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder and Autism (including Asperger's Syndrome).

Research suggests that approximately 2-4% of children and students have a learning disability (Louden et al 2000).

A learning disability may include difficulties with the following:

- dyslexic-type confusion of text
- working memory
- sensory, communication and motor skills
- social and emotional awareness

Most learners with a learning disability will experience one or more of the following:

- reversals, poor spatial judgement, difficulty copying from board, sequencing and short-term memory problems.
- visual perception difficulties
- misreading words and numbers, losing place, difficulties retaining information over time
- communication problems (may have difficulty with oral or written language)
- auditory perception difficulties
- difficulty in identifying and discriminating sounds, following instructions, filtering out background noise
• difficulties with self-management
• organisational difficulties
• problems with motor skills
• difficulty with letter formation and neatness of work, slowness in writing

Learning difficulties

Learning difficulties is a general term which refers to children or students who experience difficulties with their learning.

Research suggests that between 10-16% of children and students exhibit difficulties in academic and developmental skills (Louden et al 2000).

A learning difficulty may arise as a result of one or more of the following:

• developmental delay, for example speech and language difficulties
• poor coordination, for example fine and gross motor skills
• emotional difficulties and/or trauma
• limited environmental experiences
• lack of appropriate educational opportunities
• interrupted schooling
• health issues


• (The term gifted should not be viewed as an elite term, but clear and unequivocal evidence of giftedness is needed before using the term)

• Gagne’s model identifies gifted individuals as those who possess a natural ability or aptitude in at least one field or domain of ability such as intellectual, creative, socio-affective (eg leadership or relationship focused), or sensorimotor (painting, dance, sport, music) which is manifest to an outstanding degree, placing them in the top 10% of their age peers (defined as mildly to profoundly gifted)

• Without significant support in the form of an appropriate curriculum, and trained educators, such potential may never come to fruition.

• Talent refers to outstanding performance in one or more of the above fields and emerges from giftedness as a result of the developmental process of education, practice and training. Environment, personality and chance play a big part in the developmental process.
Levels of Giftedness

- Intellectually gifted children can be classified as mildly, moderately, highly, exceptionally, and profoundly gifted. Levels of intellectual giftedness, as defined by IQ ranges, and the prevalence of such children in the population, can be classified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>IQ Range</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mildly (or basically) Gifted</td>
<td>115 - 129</td>
<td>1:6 - 1:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Gifted</td>
<td>130 - 144</td>
<td>1:44 - 1:1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Gifted</td>
<td>145 - 159</td>
<td>1:1,000 - 1:1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally Gifted</td>
<td>160 - 179</td>
<td>1:10,000 - 1:1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profoundly Gifted</td>
<td>180+</td>
<td>Fewer than 1:1 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- Several researchers over the last 70 years have proposed that the number of children who score in the extremely high ranges of IQ exceeds the theoretical expectations derived from the normal curve (Terman, 1925; Burt, 1968; Silverman, 1989; Gross, 1993). (1)
- Year level acceleration is generally only advised for children in the highly, exceptionally and profoundly gifted ranges.

Twice Exceptional Students

- Students with high intellectual potential may have specific disabilities which prevent them reaching their potential, including autism, ADD/ADHD, physical, emotional or behavioral difficulties.
They may have strong abilities in some areas, and strong weakness in others which may mask their abilities.

**Specific Criteria to Guide Student Placement for accelerated progression of students K-12**

(Adapted from Feldhusen, J F, Proctor, T B & Black, K N, 1986) (2)

The following guidelines may be used to determine a student’s ability for accelerated progression:

When a student is being considered for accelerated progression, the school principal will arrange for a comprehensive psychological evaluation of intellectual functioning, academic skills and socio-emotional adjustment.

Academically, the student should demonstrate levels of skill that are well above the average of the class she or he would be going into.

Evaluation about the student’s emotional maturity must include input from the student's parents and the teacher and educational psychologist. [Note: Gifted students are sometimes rejected by their classmates. Teachers should not confuse the absence of close age peer relationships with social immaturity. Social or emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low grade placement. In such cases the problem may be alleviated by accelerated progression. Failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation, poor adjustment and under achievement.]

Ideally, accelerated progression will occur at natural transition points, such as the beginning of the school year.

A student's physical size or physical or sensory disability will not prohibit accelerated progression.

The accelerated progression will be reviewed regularly.

**References**
