



Effective Teaching: 2010 and Beyond

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Inclusion in the classroom

Active acknowledgement of diversity

Inclusion in the classroom is "...what a teacher does to ensure all kids belong..." (Bennett and Smilanich, 1994, p. 65) and is a tool utilised by some teachers to ensure effective teaching and the optimising of student learning. This is reflected in the *Curriculum Framework* of Western Australia with the suggestion that teachers should offer students educational experiences that support inclusivity and diversity within a caring environment. Therefore, being a teacher that is mindful of inclusive learning in the classroom is not just about knowing student's likes and dislikes. It is about acknowledging different learning aspects of students, including abilities and disabilities, and catering to these when undertaking program and/or lesson planning. There are many ways that inclusion can be put into action in the classroom, and these ideas a few of them.

Catering for learners with exceptionalities

These are students that require additional assistance and resources in order to maximise learning opportunities (Kauffman, McGee & Brigham, 2004, as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2009). This can include students with disabilities and those that are considered gifted and talented.

Students with disabilities

Eggen and Kauchak (2009) describe disabilities as operative restrictions or not having the capability of performing certain tasks, due to certain conditions. Disabilities can be present as intellectual, physical, sensory, behavioural and/or learning disabilities (Foreman, 2008). As more and more children with disabilities are mainstreamed into education, it is becoming common for teachers to have a diversity of students within the class. By liaising with the parents/guardians and the student's Education Assistant (if they are allocated one), the teacher can implement programs that support the development of the student(s) with disabilities through lesson modifications.

Scenario:

Mrs. Smith is aware that Jane has dyslexia however is unsure what that means. She has observed that Jane is incline to not participate during discussion and sometimes finds it hard to complete tests in the given timeframe. Through liaising with her parents and the school special needs unit, Mrs. Smith starts to understand that Jane responds well to visual aids, as well as a change in paper colour. They also discuss the allowance of additional time within tests. Communication is furthered between Mrs. Smith and Jane's mother on a daily basis through a communications booklet. As a result of the procedures implemented by Mrs. Smith and Jane's mother, Jane is doing much better at school.

In this situation, Mrs. Smith was unsure as to the learning disability Jane suffered, although she knew the name. She discussed the situation with Jane's mother and, as a result, gained some insight and together they worked out ways to optimise Jane's learning. Not only did this help Jane, it has also fostered a Parent/Teacher relationship. Along with the help of Jane's mother, Mrs. Smith developed an Individualised Education Program, sometimes known as an I.E.P (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009) where a plan has been developed to optimise student learning and support both the classroom situation. Through this mechanism, there can be a linkage between education and resources as well as the ability for parents to monitor progress. The program is individually suited to Jane and no other student.

It is important, as a teacher, that we pay attention to students in order to determine students with possible learning disabilities, as disabilities are not just a physical concept (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009). This can be by paying attention to concepts such as attention span, organisational skills, uneven performances coordination and academic performances (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009). Upon identification, each school will have an appropriate channel for dealing with such matters and each teacher should seek these out. Whether or not the concerns are substantiated are not the issue here, teachers should not be worried about being 'proven wrong'. The issue is optimising student learning, and if concerns are present then they should be addressed no matter what. If there are no learning difficulties present then the teacher can work at other strategies to optimise learning.

The Gifted and Talented

Children that are deemed Gifted and Talented are considered to have capabilities that are on the upper end of the range (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009). These students also require additional support so that they do not become bored in their classes,

and continue to work to their maximum potential. According to the Department of Education and Training of Western Australia (DETWA, 2009a), teachers are encouraged to build a portfolio of in depth observational and formative data including tests in order to identify Gifted and Talented students. Due to the vast range of talents and gifts, students that are considered Gifted and Talented are not a cliché, nor are they the best behaved student within the class or the one that pays most attention to the teacher. They are just students with exceptional gifts and/or talents for certain aspects that fall in the higher range.

Special Education

This is defined as "Instruction designed to meet the unique needs of students with exceptionalities" (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009, p. 126). This term is not solely for students with learning difficulties deriving from a disability of sorts, but Gifted and Talented students as well. Not all students that are either seen as having a disability or Gifted and Talented are separated from their peers in separate learning environments. Many are mainstreamed and each will require modifications or extensions of class work in order to optimise learning and allow them to meet the outcomes set. This is because teachers should be

Providing all groups of students, irrespective of educational settings, with access to a wide empowering range of knowledge, skills and values. It means recognising and accommodating the different starting points, learning rates and previous experiences of individual students or groups of students" (Curriculum Council, as cited at DETWA, 2009b).

Those with exceptionalities should not be the exception to the rule, and an effective teacher ensures each student has the same opportunity to optimise learning, especially in a mainstreamed environment.

Acknowledging Intelligences

Multiple

Learning style diversity

Howard Gardner describes eight dimensions of intelligences, which can help to identify ways in which individual student's learning can be optimised, depending on the type of lesson, and the interactions within the lesson (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009; Marsh, 2004).

Intelligence Dimension	Examples of teaching strategies
Visual/Spatial	Allowing students to diagram ideas
Linguistic	Using Reading, writing, oral presentations
Interpersonal	Allowing for group, class and pair work
Bodily/Kinesthetics	Letting students build models.
Intrapersonal	Engaging in autonomous work, or work that connects with real life.
Musical	Finding musical connections and playing background music
Logical/Mathematics	Applying problem solving to the learning activity.
Naturalistic	Engaging students with nature via hiking trips or nature art.

(Adapted from Eggen & Kauchak, 2009; Georgia State University, n.d.; Marsh, 2004).

As part of inclusion, to be an effective teacher it is important that lessons incorporate one or more of the Multiple Intelligences in order to optimise student learning and be supportive of diversity. Just like no two students are the same, no two students will learn in the same way.

True to the form for diversity, students do not solve problems, approach learning and process information in the same manner due to differences in learning styles. Some students have deep approaches there they remember relating aspects such as economics, and are said to be motivated intrinsically. Whereas some students are have a surface approach to learning and memorise aspects such as dates and are motivated by mechanisms such as academic achievements (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009).

This can be hard on teachers because it really hammers home the importance of bringing variety to the classroom so that student learning is optimised. This is because no single strategy will suit all the students (Brophy, 2004, as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2009). Therefore, as a teacher if you present a PowerPoint presentation one lesson, perhaps you might like to try a hands-on activity next lesson and something different for the following lesson.

As teachers it is also important that, along with Multiple Intelligences, we help students to identify the way that they learn. If they are aware, there is greater chance that they can accommodate for their own needs for a given task. However, do not assume this will occur and keep catering for Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009).

Awareness if learning style diversity is another way that teachers can identify with students as individuals.



How can I be an effective, inclusive, teacher?

Other than being aware, and following appropriate school channels as stipulated by the individual school, one could:

Link the curriculum to instructional methods

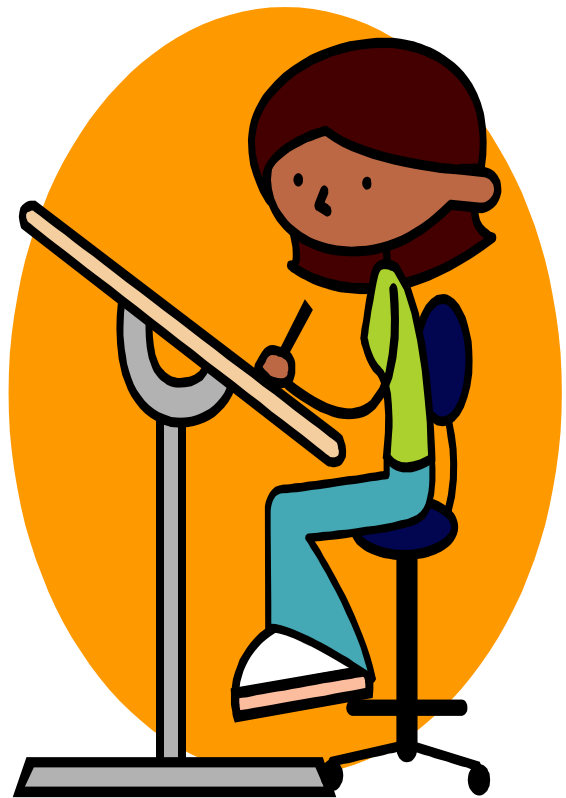
In terms of a student with disabilities (of any nature), or Gifted and Talented students, teachers should identify priorities of the curriculum, such as outcomes in the Western Australian *Curriculum Framework* and work them into an Individualised Education Program in order to optimise student learning. This can also assist in long-term goals for the individual students. Learning styles and multiple intelligences can be catered for in that, by identifying curriculum priorities teachers can then adopt different learning styles and intelligences within the lesson activities (Foreman, 2008).

Active monitoring

According to Foreman (2008) an attribute of an effective teacher is that they constantly review and monitor student performance. This can be done via observation, portfolios and/or work sample's, the key is to vary them so that the samples are fair. Not only can this determine if the Individualised Educational Program for students with exceptionalities is optimal for that particular student, it can help teachers to identify other students that may have a learning difficulty. It can also identify problem spots in mainstream students, and indicate when further instruction on particular outcomes is required.

Most of all, just acknowledge that each student is an individual and has the right to be catered for with a differentiated curriculum be they considered age appropriate or have learning exceptionalities. If there are any concerns take it through the appropriate channels so that Individualised Educational Programs can be developed that are particular for that student (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009; Foreman, 2008). If things are going well, ensure that activities cater for Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles, varying them often so that student learning is optimised (Eggen & Kauchak, 2009; Marsh, 2004)

This is just one take on how to be an inclusive teacher!



References

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