



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations



National Disability Coordination Officer Program

IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

A resource
for teachers



Dear Teacher

There is much to know as a teacher nowadays and very little time to find it out. For example did you know...

- » almost 1 in 5 of your students are likely to have some form of disability (Australia's Health 2010) with higher numbers likely within Indigenous populations. In a class of 30 for example, that's a large proportion of your students to consider!

As a former high school teacher I understand that managing a class of diverse learners can be a challenge at the best of times. The aim of this resource is to draw together a number of strategies that might help you. Some of these will work for you and your students, and others won't. At least this might be a starting point to develop your awareness of some of the educational implications and strategies available in working with students with a range of challenges and as a result lead to greater educational success for these students.

Below are some generalised strategies you could try, in addition to the more specific strategies for particular conditions listed in this resource. Of course you should also follow any suggestions made by the health professional/s working with the student.

- » Discuss with the parents/guardians strategies that work at home and keep communication pathways open so that you can help each other
- » Develop an awareness within peers, to foster a climate of tolerance and understanding in the classroom and school
- » Find out more about what the student experiences and avenues that can assist them

All the Best

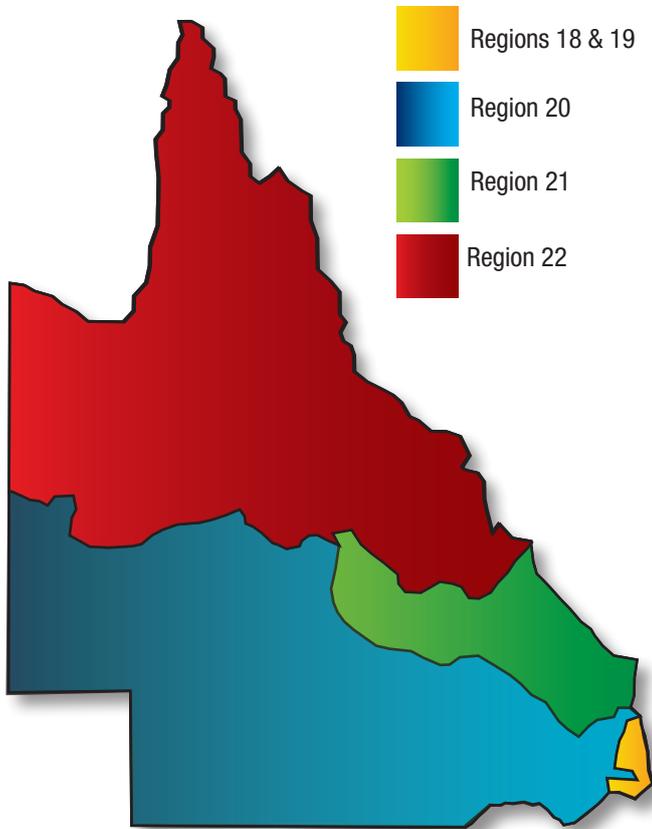


Clea Alcorn
National Disability Coordination Officer - Region 22

This resource was developed as part of the National Disability Coordination Officer Program. National Disability Co-ordination Officers (NDCOs) play a valuable role helping to increase the access and participation rates of students with disabilities to study at university or at TAFE and then move to employment. They perform a range of functions which are focused on the provision of practical assistance and support to students with disabilities to make the transition from school to university or from school to TAFE and then to employment.



National Disability Coordination Officer Program
Queensland



NDCO Service Area 18

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Address: Career Employment Australia
29 Cambridge St, Coorparoo, Brisbane, Qld
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NDCO Service Region 20

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Mail: As above

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Email: stevenp@steps.net.au
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Website: www.ndco.stepscs.net.au

NDCO Service Region 21

Bundaberg, Hervey Bay City, Wide Bay-Burnett SD, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Fitzroy SD

Officer: Julie Irwin
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Fax: (07) 4922 6127
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Address: Community Solutions Group
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Implications and Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom | A Teachers Resource

- ➔ ADD or ADHD
- ➔ Anxiety Disorders
- ➔ Asperger's Syndrome
- ➔ Autism Spectrum Disorders
- ➔ Bipolar Disorders
- ➔ Conduct Disorders
- ➔ Depression
- ➔ Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- ➔ Oppositional Defiant Disorders
- ➔ Post Traumatic Stress Disorders
- ➔ Schizophrenia

Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADD / ADHD)

Some students may be overactive and unable to pay attention or stay on task, or they may be quiet and easily distracted. Symptoms may also be situation-specific.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Losing or forgetting materials or equipment
- » Incomplete tasks or assessments
- » Impatient eg blurt out answers before you have finished asking Questions in class
- » Irritable or fidgety
- » May struggle to pay attention to details
- » Distracted easily even when spoken to directly
- » Trouble taking turns or letting others have a go

Strategies to try

- » Provide consistent structure and clearly define your expectations
- » Check any instructions, eg homework, are written correctly
- » Break instructions into 1 or 2 steps at a time
- » Include variety eg change activities a number of times during a lesson
- » Consider modifying curriculum to better suit their learning style or behaviours
- » Consider flexibility around assessments eg chance to redo, small parts due at a time
- » Catch the student being good
- » Reduce stress or pressure as these can impact on their self-control
- » Work with student to identify a code to help them recognise that they have gotten off task and should refocus (helps reduce embarrassment at being singled out in front of their peers)

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Anxiety Disorders

Some students suffer from anxieties severe enough to interfere with their everyday life. Many with this disorder are quiet students and the signs may be missed as a result.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Worry about getting everything right may mean they take longer to complete tasks
- » Frustration may lead to difficulty completing tasks
- » Refusal to begin tasks or avoidance of classes/school out of fear of failure
- » Avoidance behaviours when presenting to others
- » Excessive worry about homework or grades or assessment
- » Isolating behaviour
- » Getting behind can create a cycle of failure, increased anxiety and avoidance

Strategies to try

- » Share deadlines for assessment items as early as possible
- » Consider flexible timelines for assessments and check points along the way
- » Check any instructions, eg homework, are written correctly (so they are attempting the right thing)
- » Consider modifying curriculum to better suit their learning style
- » Encouragement
- » Reduce workloads when needed eg require essential elements of homework tasks rather than the whole lot
- » Keep to schedule as much as possible and send notes to the next class if they are made late
- » Consider their interests and different technologies
- » Set up chances for success
- » Consider what may provide a safe option, such as a lunch club

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Aspergers Syndrome

Some students have impacts on behaviour, sensory systems, visual and audio processing, and social interactions. Often considered to be 'high-functioning' on the Autism Spectrum.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » May have difficulty understanding social interaction, including nonverbal gestures, this impacts on the ability to develop friendships, sharing interests or show empathy
- » Changes in routine can result in anxiety, withdrawal or anger
- » Can be literal – taking instructions by the word rather than by intent
- » May have a large vocabulary or high level of knowledge in one area
- » Can have an over or under sensitivity to stimuli such as noise, light, smells or touch

Strategies to try

- » Create structured, predictable and calming environments (consider alternatives for lunch time)
- » Consider assigning a peer helper
- » Utilise their interests to link to curriculum or to further develop a topic for their peers
- » Monitor the language you use to identify instructions that could be taken literally
- » Demonstrate and highlight socially acceptable behaviours, such as expected greetings and responses, and group interaction skills
- » Notify the student of any upcoming changes to the class schedule and what this means for them
- » Learn triggers and symptoms of a meltdown and intervene as early as possible
- » Identify calming activities and items
- » Develop an alternative activity or space they can go to if feeling out of sorts – self or teacher initiated

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Autism Spectrum Disorders

Some students have developmental delays impacting communication, social interaction, sensory impairment and behaviour. Each student's behavior is unique.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » May display repetitive movement such as rocking or walking around the room
- » Can seem to be in their own world and oblivious to things or people around them
- » Can have an over or under sensitivity to stimuli such as noise, light, smells or touch
- » May rarely speak, repeat the phrases over and over or repeat what is said to them
- » May have difficulty understanding social interaction, including nonverbal gestures – impacts on ability to develop friendships, sharing interests or show empathy
- » Changes in routine can result in anxiety, withdrawal or anger

Strategies to try

- » Create structured, predictable and calming environments (consider alternatives for lunch time)
- » Utilise schedules and discuss upcoming changes and what this means for them
- » Teach skills through direct teaching eg functional learning skills like writing left to right and social skills like understanding facial expressions
- » Minimise visual and auditory distractions – modify the environment to suit sensory needs
- » Avoid long strings of instructions
- » Utilise their interests to link to curriculum
- » If a student avoids eye contact allow them to use peripheral vision or to watch the forehead of a speaker instead of the eyes
- » Identify calming activities and items
- » Develop an alternative activity or space they can go to if feeling out of sorts – self or teacher initiated

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Bipolar Disorders

Some students experience unusual shifts in mood, energy and ability to function. Can occur rapidly and frequently during the day.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » May experience fluctuations in mood, energy and motivation hourly, in specific cycles or seasonally.
- » Can have difficulty concentrating, remembering or understanding curriculum or assessments, particularly long or complex information/instructions.
- » May experience overwhelming emotions such as sadness, embarrassment or rage.
- » Social skills and peer engagement may be challenging as a result.

Strategies to try

- » Consider alternative engagement formats when concentration is low eg recorded books compared to self-reading
- » Break tasks into manageable segments and check understanding of instructions and progress
- » Consider a flexible curriculum to provide options that suit the student within each stage of their changing mood and behaviour
- » Reduce academic demands when energy is low and increase opportunities for achievement when energy is high
- » Develop an alternative activity or space they can go to if feeling out of sorts – self or teacher initiated

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Conduct Disorders

Some students display serious, repetitive and persistent misbehaviour. Can be aggressive behavior toward people or animals, destruction of property, deceitfulness or theft, and serious violations of rules.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » May engage in power struggles and react badly to direct demands or statements such as 'You need to..'
- » Refusal to complete tasks can negatively affect academic success
- » Can present bullying or suspendable behaviours
- » May have poor attendance
- » Can have little empathy for others and a lack of appropriate feelings of guilt and remorse
- » Bravado may mask low self-esteem
- » Can work better with 1-1 situations rather than in groups

Strategies to try

- » Check curriculum is at an appropriate level (not too hard or too easy)
- » Utilise age-appropriate materials that conveys positive and relevant messages
- » Use sincere praise rather than tokenistic praise
- » Consider alternative technology eg computers for tasks
- » Reduce likelihood of arguments and avoid power struggles. Be aware of escalating prompts such as shouting, touching, nagging or cornering the student
- » Utilise options rather than demands such as 'You must..'
- » Create key classroom rules together
- » Discuss calming strategies (when they are calm!)

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Depression

Some students experience persistent and intense sad or hopeless feelings that affect their thoughts, feelings, behaviour and body. This is more than feeling blue occasionally

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Marked change in interest in schoolwork and activities may be observed.
- » Grades can drop due to lack of interest, loss of motivation or excessive absences.
- » May be withdrawn, isolating, listless or quiet in class, even to the point of sleeping in class
- » Can be fidgety or restless, distracting others
- » Assessments may not be turned in or incomplete
- » May be defiant or disruptive
- » Can talk about dying or suicide (take all conversations as serious and seek help)

Strategies to try

- » Reduce classroom pressures and discuss current commitments and alternatives
- » Break tasks into manageable pieces
- » Reassure students they can catch up. Discuss actual steps and be flexible and realistic with expectations
- » Assist students to recognise positive contributions and performance (remind them it has not been all bad)
- » Help students to use realistic and positive statements about their performance and outlook on the future
- » Encourage gradual social interaction (eg small group work before large group work)

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Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Some students have obsessive thoughts and impulses that can be recurrent, persistent, intrusive and senseless. An individual with OCD may perform rituals to neutralise their anxiety caused by obsessive thoughts. Thoughts and behaviours are so time consuming they interfere with every day life.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Compulsive activities take up so much time that students may not be able to concentrate on school work
- » Many students with OCD find verbal communication difficult
- » May feel isolated or different from peers
- » May experience anxiety or depressed mood
- » Can have absenteeism to avoid detection of their 'odd' behaviours
- » You may observe students erasing answers or sentences repeatedly in an effort to get it just right
- » Can be unproductive through arranging desk, retracing objects, touching objects, etc over and over

Strategies to try

- » Accommodate situations or behaviours the student has no control over
- » Redirect the behaviour if possible rather than using consequences
- » Consider flexible delivery methods for assessment eg if continually correcting writing try oral reports
- » Display a schedule for the class so the student will know what to expect
- » Consider alternative technology solutions
- » Determine if a student can redo their assessment to improve their grades

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Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Some students seem angry a lot and are quick to blame others for mistakes and act in negative, hostile and vindictive ways. These behaviours occur more frequently than within their peers.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » May react in unusual way to positive reinforcement eg destroying the project they were being praised for
- » Can be argumentative and defiant
- » May deliberately annoy others
- » Sudden unprovoked anger may be displayed
- » May consistently challenge class rules, refuse to do work and argue or fight with others.

Strategies to try

- » Try to avoid power struggles and choose your battles wisely
- » Give two clear choices when decisions are needed
- » Establish clear classroom rules and be clear on what is not negotiable
- » Display a schedule for the class so the student will know what to expect
- » Avoid comments or bringing up situations likely to cause an argument
- » Praise students when they respond positively
- » Minimise downtime and plan transitions carefully
- » Carefully structure cooperative learning activities eg group work
- » When the student has completed a designated amount of non-preferred activity, reinforce cooperation by allowing them to do something more enjoyable or less difficult for them

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Post Traumatic Stress Disorders

Some students are involved in or witness a traumatic event that can impact through thoughts and memories from the experience. Severity and persistence varies.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Symptoms may come and go for no apparent reason
- » Student may regress and result in increased emotional and behavioural problems
- » May be unable to perform previously acquired skills, even basic functions like speech
- » Capacity for learning may be decreased
- » May have difficulty concentrating or engaging
- » Can be easily startled or over reactive
- » Can lose interest in activities and people
- » May experience physical reactions to reminders of the event including headaches, stomachaches, dizziness or discomfort
- » Fear of certain places, things or situations may arise

Strategies to try

- » Try to establish a feeling of safety and acceptance in school
- » Don't hesitate to interrupt activities or avoid circumstances that are upsetting for the student
- » Develop a consistent, predictable routine to establish a sense of normality and security
- » Eliminate stressful situations
- » Allow choices to give some sense of control
- » Don't say to forget the incidence as the symptoms may be as a result of just that. It also minimises the importance of the trauma and the student may feel a sense of failure if they can't forget
- » Reassure the student that they are having a common response to the trauma
- » Incorporate exercises into your routines, which can help relieve anxiety and restlessness

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Schizophrenia

Some students experience hallucinations, delusions and difficulty in organising their thoughts. Early signs are usually non-specific and come on gradually.

Possible Implications for their Education

- » Can have difficulty concentrating or motivating themselves
- » May fluctuate in behaviour and performance
- » Can exhibit thought problems, physical complaints or become withdrawn
- » Their emotional responses may be inappropriate
- » May have severe anxiety and fearfulness
- » Speech may be disorganized
- » Social interactions may be difficult

Strategies to try

- » Reduce stress by going slowly when introducing new situations
- » Help students set realistic goals for academic achievement and extra-curricular activities
- » Identify learner type and areas of strengths to enhance learning eg visual learner, logic thinker, etc
- » Utilise medical advice and information from the parents/guardians to understand the student's behaviour and to develop a conducive learning environment for them

Information & Resources

Reachout Teachers network

Access to resources and practical strategies for education professionals on a range of youth mental health issues and online technologies.

<http://www.teachers.reachoutpro.com.au/>

Beyondblue

Teacher resources including manuals for classes Yr 8 and above.

http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=4.64

MindMatters school resource kit

MindMatters is a mental health promotion resource for secondary schools.

http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/resources_and_downloads/mindmatters/mindmatters_resource_kit_landing.html

Classroom Ideas for the Teacher

Strategies for Addressing Mental Health Wellbeing in Any Classroom.

<http://www.media.mytalk.com.au/4bc/podcasts/mental-health.pdf>

Here to Help

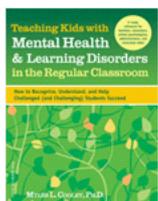
Mental health and substance use eg factsheets, toolkits, brochures. (*note American*)

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/toolkits>

Strategies for Employers with students on work experience

2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/publications/workers_mental_illness_guide.html



Teaching Kids with Mental Health & Learning Disorders in the Regular Classroom:
How to Recognize, Understand, and Help Challenged (and Challenging) Students Succeed
Myles L. Cooley

This resource was based on the set of factsheets developed by the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. For further information go to <http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Educ/MACMH/MACMH.html>

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