



Universally designing curriculum and assessment

Presented by Loren Swancutt



What we'll be covering...

- Define equitable, high-quality learning experiences for all students
- Explore key elements of inclusive curriculum provision
- Examine how national and state curricula support this approach
- Learn how to plan inclusive, grade-level teaching and learning using:
 - Universal design principles
 - Curriculum adjustments



Should all students have the opportunity to learn grade-level academic curriculum?



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But you don't actually mean ALL* students?

*...*surely not students with complex learning profiles?!*

Should **all students have the opportunity to
learn **grade-level academic curriculum**?**

Are you sure you mean ALL grade-level curriculum?*

*...*surely she doesn't mean Shakespeare, trigonometry and physics?!*



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“They aren’t ready” “But they don’t even speak” “But can/should they?”

“That’s too challenging” “Functional/life skills would be better” “They will never understand that”

“They are too far behind their peers” “They would be too disruptive” “The ‘curriculum gap’ is too large”

“They will never use that” “But they can’t even read yet” “They don’t need to learn that”

“You can’t change the curriculum” “That content can’t be adjusted” “Surely not”

“Classroom teachers don’t have the time or capacity to include them” “It wouldn’t be fair” “Waste of instructional time”

“They won’t get anything out of it” “But I’ve got 25 other kids to worry about”

“Their IEP is focused on something else” “That’s way too hard” “But they’re not forming sentences yet”

Students with Complex Learning Profiles

Students with...

“...a combination of impairments affecting behaviour, cognition, communication, emotional regulation, mobility and/or sensory processing.

Students in this group can also include those who have experienced Childhood Complex Trauma arising from abuse, neglect and exclusion from education”

(Graham, 2020, p. xx)



Influences

- Societal prejudice (Agran et al., 2020; Jorgensen, 1998)
- Perceptions of competence (Vandercook et al., 2020)
- Fiscal and professional constraints (Hehir, 2011)
- Bureaucratic structures (Agran et al., 2020; Dukes & Berlingo, 2020)
- Alleged benefits of segregated education provision (Agran et al., 2020)
- Resistance to change (Gee et al., 2024)



Challenges of Practice

- Prioritisation of functional/life skills over academics (Price & Slee, 2021; Walker et al., 2018)
- Teachers not confident in creating access to the academic curriculum
(Deloitte Access Economics, 2017; Walker et al., 2018)
- Challenges Identifying and implementing appropriate curriculum
adjustment (Barr & Mavropoulou, 2021; Carter et al., 2020)
- Delineation between special education teacher and regular classroom
teacher roles and responsibilities (Mortier, 2018)
- Lack of influential leadership (Gee et al., 2024)
- Lack of professional learning and support (Gee et al., 2024)



Educational Experiences

Students with complex learning profiles are:

- Disproportionately segregated compared to other students with disability
(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020)
- Twice as likely than other students with disability to attend special education classes and units when they do attend regular schools (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020)
- Provided with alternative curriculum – often centered on functional/life skills
(Walker et al., 2018)
- Diminished educational experience without appropriate, accessible, and meaningful opportunities to learn (Taub, 2017; Kurth et al., 2024).



Importance of access to the academic curriculum

- Inclusive education is more effective than segregated education

(Agran et al., 2020; Cole et al., 2020; Dessmontet et al., 2012; McDonnell & Hunt, 2014; Kurth et al., 2024; Ryndak et al., 2013)

- Ability to learn a variety of academic skills

(Browder et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2010; Wehmeyer et al., 2003)

- Academic achievement accelerates when included in the regular classroom and curriculum

(Cole et al., 2020, Cole et al., 2022; Gee et al., 2020, Kurth et al., 2012; Kurth et al., 2024)

- Most valuable content, activities and contexts exist within the regular curriculum

(Thompson et al., 2020; Gee et al., 2024)

**Inclusion in grade-level academic curriculum =
meaningful opportunities to learn**



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Providing Meaningful Opportunities to Learn

- ✓ Presumed competence/least dangerous assumption
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Regular grade-level academic curriculum
- ✓ Regular teacher, classroom and instructional opportunities
- ✓ Prioritisation of academic skills and knowledge
- ✓ Any necessary functional skills are embedded within natural teaching and learning
- ✓ Access to adjustments and supports (if/when needed)
- ✓ Increasing intensity and/or frequency of instruction (if/when needed)
- ✓ Focus on access, participation and learning progress

Equal opportunity through equitable access and participation



Shared understanding

ALL students receiving what they require to engage and succeed

Regular content and instructional experiences as same-aged peers

Equitable access to the grade-level curriculum

Inclusion *n.* An instance of being included
Include *v.* To involve a person in...
Inclusive *adj.* Not excluding any person



Shared understanding

Grade-level curriculum



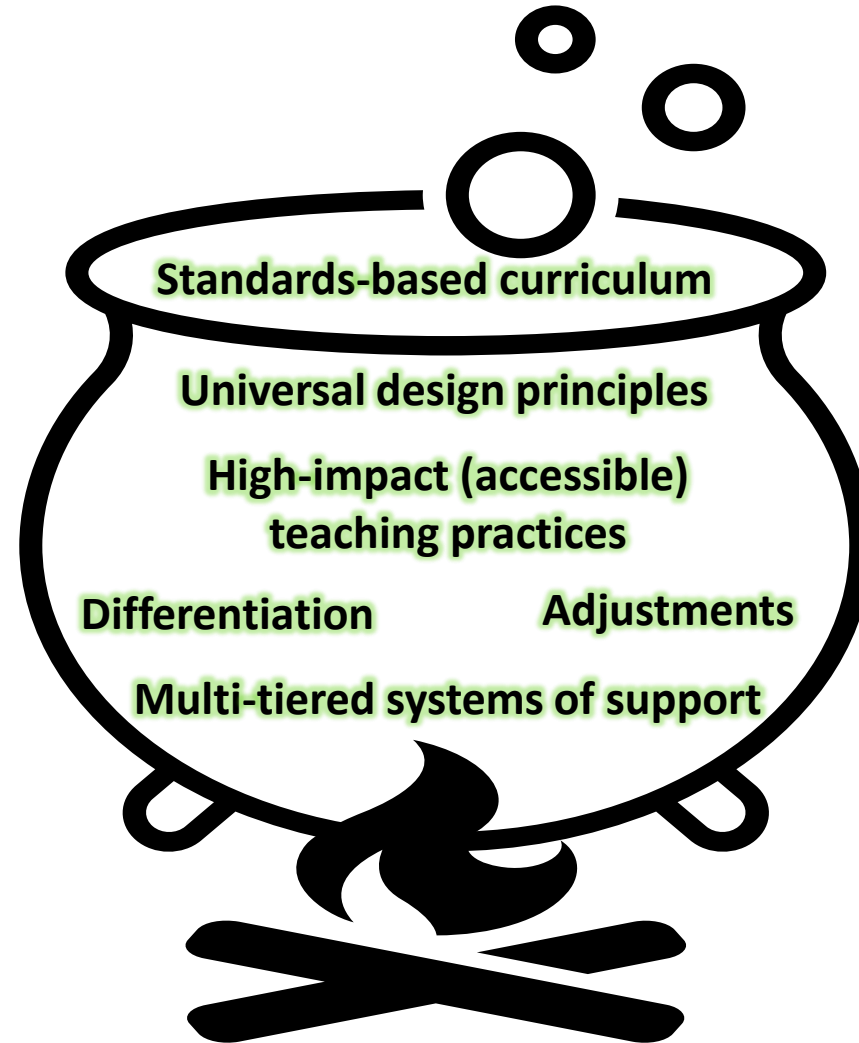
- Identified curriculum for all students – The Australian Curriculum (or its stated-based iterations)
- Covering all learning areas
- Content from the grade in which the student is enrolled
- Personalised (adjustments, adapted materials etc) to ensure access, participation, and learning
- Delivered primarily by classroom teachers (with support)



- Separate curriculum (often designed for certain students or drawn from alternate frameworks)
- Covering only some learning areas
- Content from a lower grade level
- Without appropriate personalisation
- Delivered primarily by special education/support teacher/teacher assistant



Elements of Inclusive Curriculum Provision



**We know what to do and why,
but how do we do it?**



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Inclusive Academic Curriculum Framework (IACF)

Development:

- Reviewed curriculum and education system approaches to inclusive curriculum provision
- Reviewed 13 frameworks directed toward standards-based curriculum and the inclusion of students with complex learning profiles
 - Commonalities/differences
 - Key steps/processes
- Synthesised, iterated, innovated, drew on professional knowledge and practice, anecdotal evidence and experience
- Focused on systematic processes (practical applications)
- Created and tested the IACF



Inclusive Academic Curriculum Framework (IACF)

Rationale and development:

- Clarifies and contextualises theory and policy to provide a practical and innovative approach to inclusive curriculum planning and instructional delivery
- Addresses the challenges associated with interpreting and planning grade-level academic curriculum for students with complex learning profiles
- Differs from existing models through its focus on the Australian context and the Australian Curriculum, its prioritisation of academic learning, its alignment of personalised supports and adjustments to grade-level content and contexts, and its level of nuance and guidance
- The IACF places classroom teachers at the forefront and acknowledges their critical leadership in curriculum planning and implementation for all students



Inclusive Academic Curriculum Framework (IACF)

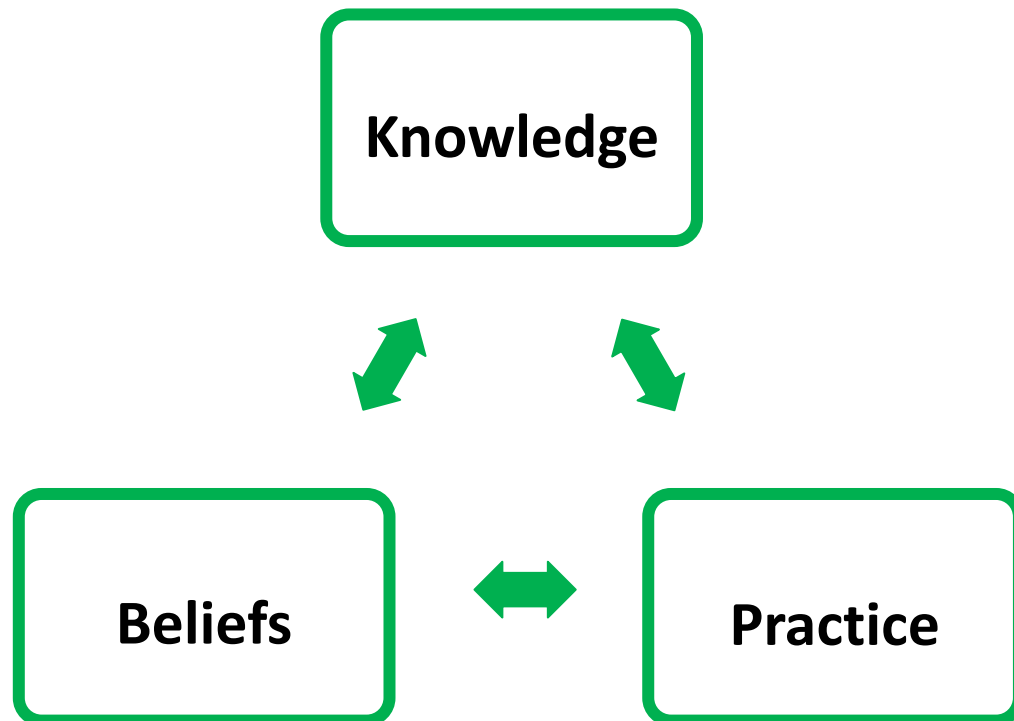
Core principles:

1. Have high-expectations of all students, including students with complex learning profiles, and presume that they are competent to learn age-equivalent social and academic topics drawn from the regular grade-level curriculum.
2. Value the rights of all students to attend heterogenous, inclusive classrooms that foster belonging and learning for all.
3. Engage in collaborative and consultative practices to support professional knowledge, understanding and practice.
4. Prioritise grade-level academic curriculum content for students with complex learning profiles through the provision of curriculum adjustments.
5. Plan for and support full access and participation in grade-level academic instructional tasks and activities by engaging with universal design principles and inclusive practices.



Inclusive Academic Curriculum Framework (IACF)

It's more than the 'what'

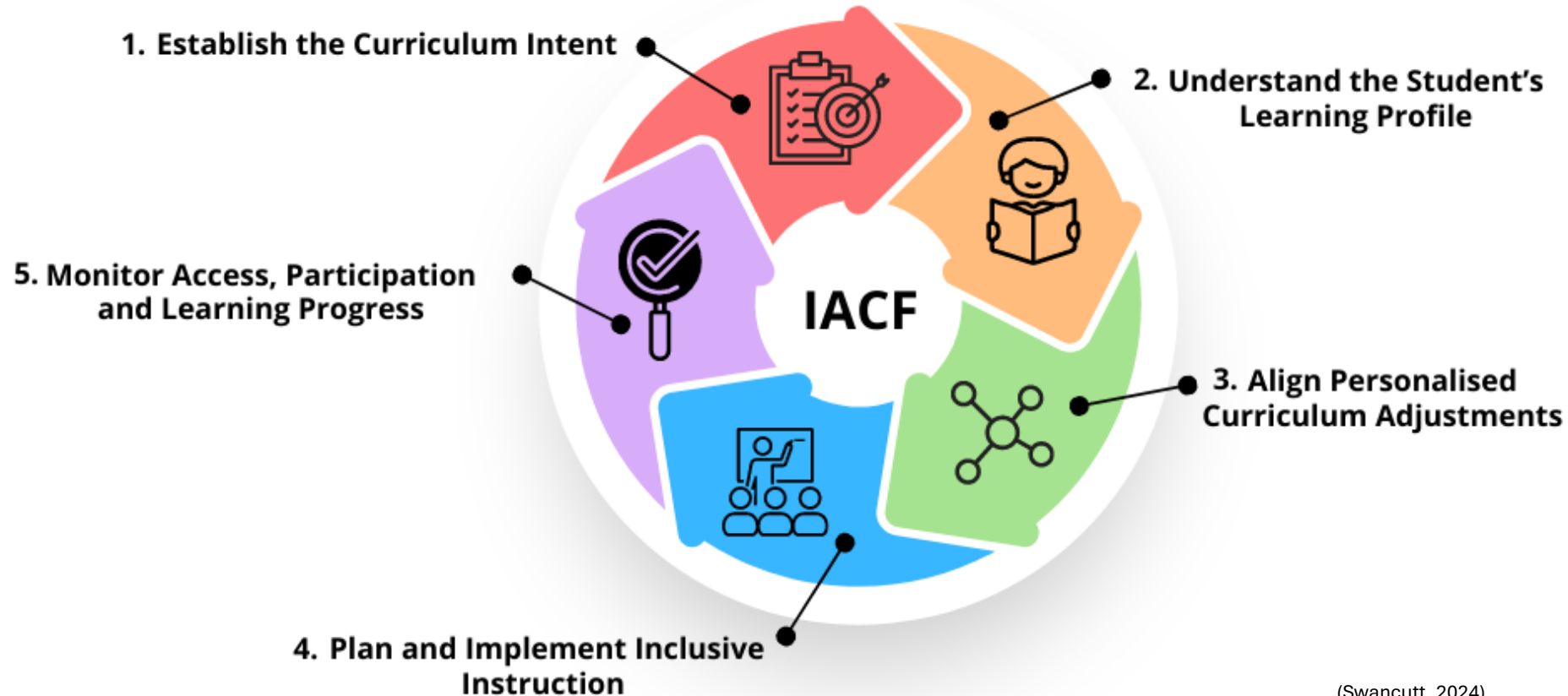


Genuine implementation:

- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Job-embedded
 - Contextual
 - Knowledge of students
 - Drawing on school-based curriculum processes
- Ongoing feedback, coaching and dispersed professional learning



Inclusive Academic Curriculum Framework (IACF)



(Swanutt, 2024)

Establish the Curriculum Intent

1. Identifying the aspect(s) of the grade-level achievement standard that are forming the focus of the unit of study
2. Deconstructing the identified aspect(s) of the achievement standard to determine what concepts and skills are required
3. Identifying the associated content descriptions and prioritising grade-level content
4. Refining instructional goals and determining critical function(s)
5. Developing standards-based marking criteria and determining the means of summative assessment

(Swancutt, 2024)



Establish the Curriculum Intent

Achievement Standard – Year 10 Math

Students apply Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve practical problems involving right-angled triangles.

Solve practical problems applying Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry of right-angled triangles, including problems involving direction and angles of elevation and depression

Concepts	Skills
Pythagoras theorem	Apply Pythagoras' theorem to find unknown sides and lengths
Trigonometry	Apply trigonometric ratios (sine, cosine, tangent) to calculate unknown angles or side lengths
Right-angled triangles	Solve practical problems involving right-angled triangles real world scenarios involving direction and angles of elevation and depression



Identifying Barriers to Learning

High-probability barriers

Construct irrelevant demands



Reading

Handwriting

Memorising

Mental
computation

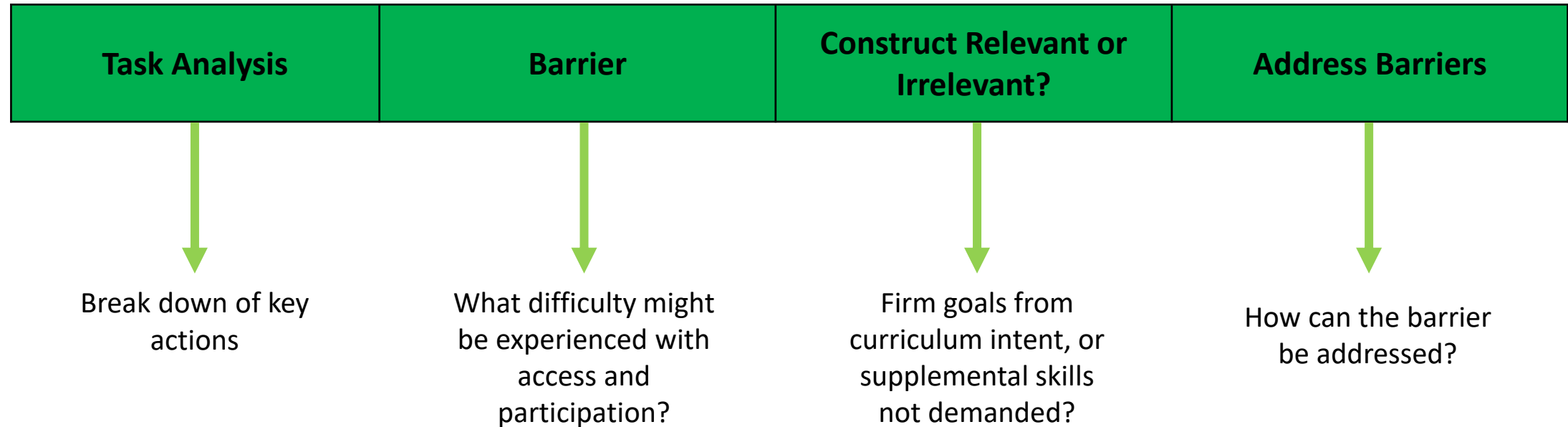
Tracking/copying

Fine motor



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Identifying Barriers to Learning



Identifying Barriers to Learning

Task Analysis	Construct Relevant or Irrelevant	Barrier	Address Barriers
Read and interpret problem	Construct Irrelevant	Reading skills	Universal design principles Remove barriers Reduce the impact of barriers Respond to barriers
Draw labelled diagram	Construct Irrelevant	Fine motor	
Select the formula/ratio	Construct Relevant	Memorising	
Write the formula/ratio	Construct Irrelevant	Handwriting, tracking, copying error	
Substitute measurements	Construct Relevant	Handwriting, tracking, copying error	
Calculate each step	Construct Relevant	Mental computation	

(adapted from, Swancutt, 2024)



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Addressing Barriers

R3 Model		
R1.	Remove	Engage universal design principles to remove barriers that can be avoided (e.g., removing a rigid time restriction from the conditions of a task).
R2.	Reduce	Engage universal design principles to reduce the impact of barriers that cannot be completely removed (e.g., providing clear and concise visual supports to support whole-class verbal instruction).
R3.	Respond	Provide adjustment to enable equitable access and participation (e.g., simplifying the complexity of a task).

(Swancutt, 2024)



Standards-based Marking Guides

- Achievement standard is the representation of satisfactory achievement
- Cognition/complexity remains consistent across the scale
- Sophistication of application of knowledge and skills increases and decreases across the scale
- Curriculum elements inform the variation of sophistication
- Excludes construct irrelevant demands
- Flexible application – what, not how
- Student against curriculum, not student against student



Standards-based Marking Guides

Increasing sophistication and application		Satisfactory	Decreasing sophistication and application	
A	B	C	D	E
Solve complex problems using Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry, including multi-step applications involving angles of elevation and depression, directional bearings, and combined diagrams.	Solve practical problems using Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry, including problems involving angles of elevation and depression and directional bearings, with some diagram interpretation or multi-step reasoning.	Solve practical problems applying Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry of right-angled triangles, including problems involving direction and angles of elevation and depression.	Solve simple problems involving Pythagoras' theorem and basic trigonometric ratios, in right-angled triangles, with clearly labelled diagrams and single-step calculations. including problems involving direction and angles of elevation and depression	Solve basic problems using given sides or angles in right-angled triangles to perform single-step calculations using Pythagoras' theorem or one trigonometric ratio.

Supports: Content knowledge, developmental sequence of knowledge and skills, 'low floor/high ceiling,' curriculum elements



Determining the Means of Assessment

- Aligned with the achievement standard
- Aligned with the marking criteria
- Universal design principles – sufficient flexibility
- Consideration of methods, materials and conditions
- Identify and address construct irrelevant demands
- Focused on what students can do over what students can't do
- Learning experiences scaffold students toward successful completion

Tip: Draw on and critically analyse past assessment tasks, utilise content description elaborations, utilise content description resources



Understand the Student's Learning Profile

1. Gathering informing data about the student to identify their background, capabilities, performance, and educational support requirements in the context of the learning area/subject
2. Synthesising informing data to inform shared decision-making regarding curriculum priorities, instructional strategies and adjustments

(Swanutt, 2024)



Understand the Student's Learning Profile

1. What are the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and support requirements?
2. What are the student's communicative competencies and behaviours?
3. How does the student currently access and participate in the learning area/subject?
4. How does the student navigate the classroom environment and routines for this learning area/subject?
5. What barriers exist in relation to curriculum and common instructional approaches used in this learning area/subject?
6. What adjustments are needed for the student to engage in and learn from the grade-level academic curriculum in this learning area/subject?

(Swancutt, 2024)



Aligning Personalised Curriculum Adjustments

1. Identifying competencies and barriers relating to the grade-level unit of study
2. Determining the origin/cause of barriers
3. Determining how best to address the identified barriers
4. Determining the need for alternate achievement standards
5. Identifying meaningful instructional goals
6. Adjusting the marking criteria and assessment task

(Swancutt, 2024)



Aligning Personalised Curriculum Adjustments

2.0

Mathematics scope and sequence – Levels 7–10A

Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 10A
Achievement standards					
Students interpret and use timetables, and measure, calculate and compare elapsed time. They convert between common units of length, mass and capacity. They use the formula for the area of a rectangle and angle properties to solve problems.	Students apply knowledge of angle relationships and the sum of angles in a triangle to solve problems, giving reasons. They establish and use formulas for the areas of triangles and parallelograms and the volumes of rectangular and triangular prisms to solve problems. They describe the relationships between the radius, diameter and circumference of a circle.	Students use appropriate metric units when solving measurement problems involving the perimeter and area of composite shapes, and volume of right prisms. They use Pythagoras' theorem to solve measurement problems involving unknown lengths of right-angled triangles. Students use formulas to solve problems involving the area and circumference of circles. They solve problems of duration involving 12- and 24-hour cycles across multiple time zones.	Students use formulas to solve problems involving the surface area and volume of prisms, cylinders and composite shapes. They solve problems involving ratio, similarity and scale in two-dimensional situations. They determine percentage errors in measurements. Students apply Pythagoras' theorem and use trigonometric ratios to solve problems involving right-angled triangles. They use mathematical modelling to solve practical problems involving direct and indirect proportion, ratio and scale, evaluating the model and communicating their methods and findings. Students express small and large numbers in scientific notation.	Students solve measurement problems involving surface area and volume of composite objects. They interpret and use logarithmic scales representing small or large quantities or change in applied contexts. Students apply Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve practical problems involving right-angled triangles. They identify the impact of measurement errors on the accuracy of results. Students use mathematical modelling to solve practical problems involving direct and inverse proportion and scaling, evaluating and modifying models, and reporting assumptions, methods and findings.	No achievement standard for Level 10A.

Level 5

Students choose and use appropriate metric units to measure the attributes of length, mass and capacity, and to solve problems involving perimeter and area. Students convert between 12- and 24-hour time. They estimate, construct and measure angles in degrees.



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Aligning Personalised Curriculum Adjustments

Year 5:

Use appropriate metric units to measure and solve practical problems involving length and perimeter.

Estimate, construct and measure angles in degrees using a protractor.

Concepts	Skills
Pythagoras theorem	Apply Pythagoras' theorem to find unknown sides and lengths
Trigonometry	Apply trigonometric ratios (sine, cosine, tangent) to calculate unknown angles or side lengths
Right-angled triangles	Solve practical problems involving right-angled triangles real world scenarios involving direction and angles of elevation and depression

Individual Goals:

Identify and produce familiar number names.

Identify number names when counting.

Use gesture and informal language to identify size of objects.

Names familiar shapes in the environment



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Aligning Personalised Curriculum Adjustments

Concepts	Skills	Adjusted for Year 6 Achievement Standard	Adjusted for Individualised Goals
Pythagoras' Theorem	Apply Pythagoras' theorem to find unknown sides and lengths	Use metric units to measure and solve practical problems involving length and perimeter of right-angled triangles	Explore everyday objects with varying lengths using gesture or informal language to describe size
Trigonometric Ratios	Apply trigonometric ratios (sine, cosine, tangent) to calculate unknown angles or side lengths	Estimate and measure angles in right-angled triangles using a protractor; identify right angles	Identify angles in the environment using gestures or informal descriptions; recognise differences in size
Right-Angled Triangles	Solve practical problems involving right-angled triangles in real-world scenarios involving direction and angles of elevation and depression	Interpret simple right-angled triangle problems in real-world contexts (e.g., ramps, ladders), estimating lengths and angles	Recognise and name familiar shapes (e.g., triangle, square) in real-world contexts; use informal counting or naming strategies



Adjusting the marking criteria

Increasing sophistication and application		Satisfactory Standard	Decreasing sophistication and application	
A	B	C	D	E
<p>Use appropriate metric units to measure and solve multi-step practical problems involving length and perimeter, including those with compound shapes or combined units.</p> <p>Estimate, construct, and measure a variety of angles in composite diagrams using a protractor with increasing accuracy.</p>	<p>Use appropriate metric units to measure and solve practical problems involving length and perimeter in a range of contexts, including irregular shapes.</p> <p>Estimate, construct and measure a variety of angles (acute, obtuse, reflex) in degrees using a protractor.</p>	<p>Use appropriate metric units to measure and solve practical problems involving length and perimeter.</p> <p>Estimate, construct and measure angles in degrees using a protractor.</p>	<p>Use familiar metric units to measure and solve simple problems involving length and perimeter of regular shapes</p> <p>Estimate, construct and measure simple angles (e.g. right angles) with some use of a protractor or informal tools.</p>	<p>Use familiar units to measure and solve the length and perimeter of familiar shapes.</p> <p>Estimate, construct and Measure simple angles using a protractor..</p>



Plan for and Implement Inclusive Instruction

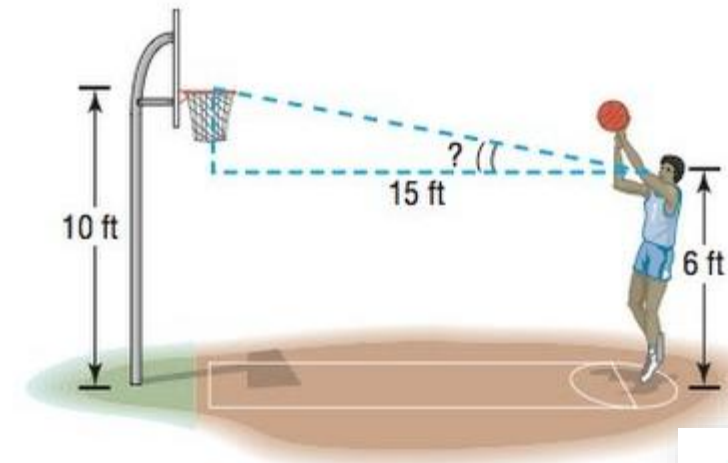
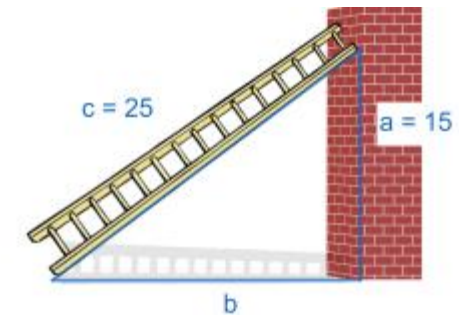
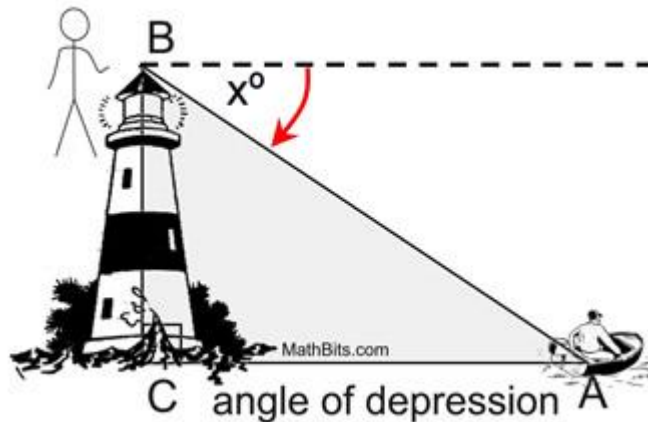
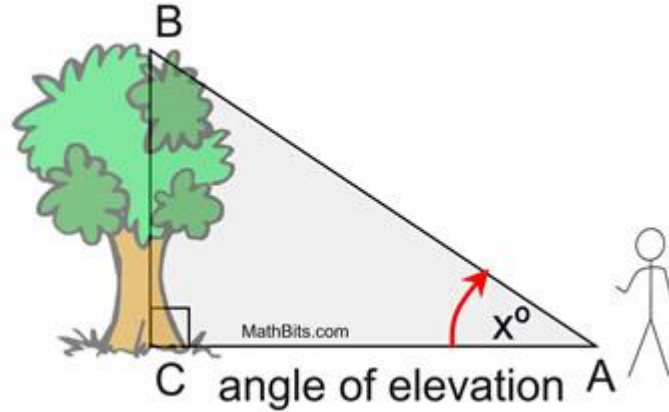
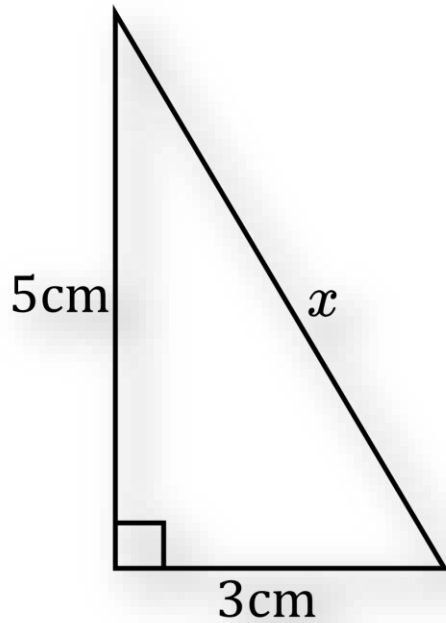
1. Translating grade-level academic curriculum and the alignment of personalised curriculum adjustments into an instructional plan
2. Implementing flexible instructional methods, materials and tasks

Drawing on knowledge of universal design principles and inclusive instructional practices

(Swancutt, 2024)



Plan for and Implement Inclusive Instruction



Geometry Find the value of the angle θ (see degrees rounded to the nearest tenth of a degree)



Monitoring Access, Participation & Learning Progress

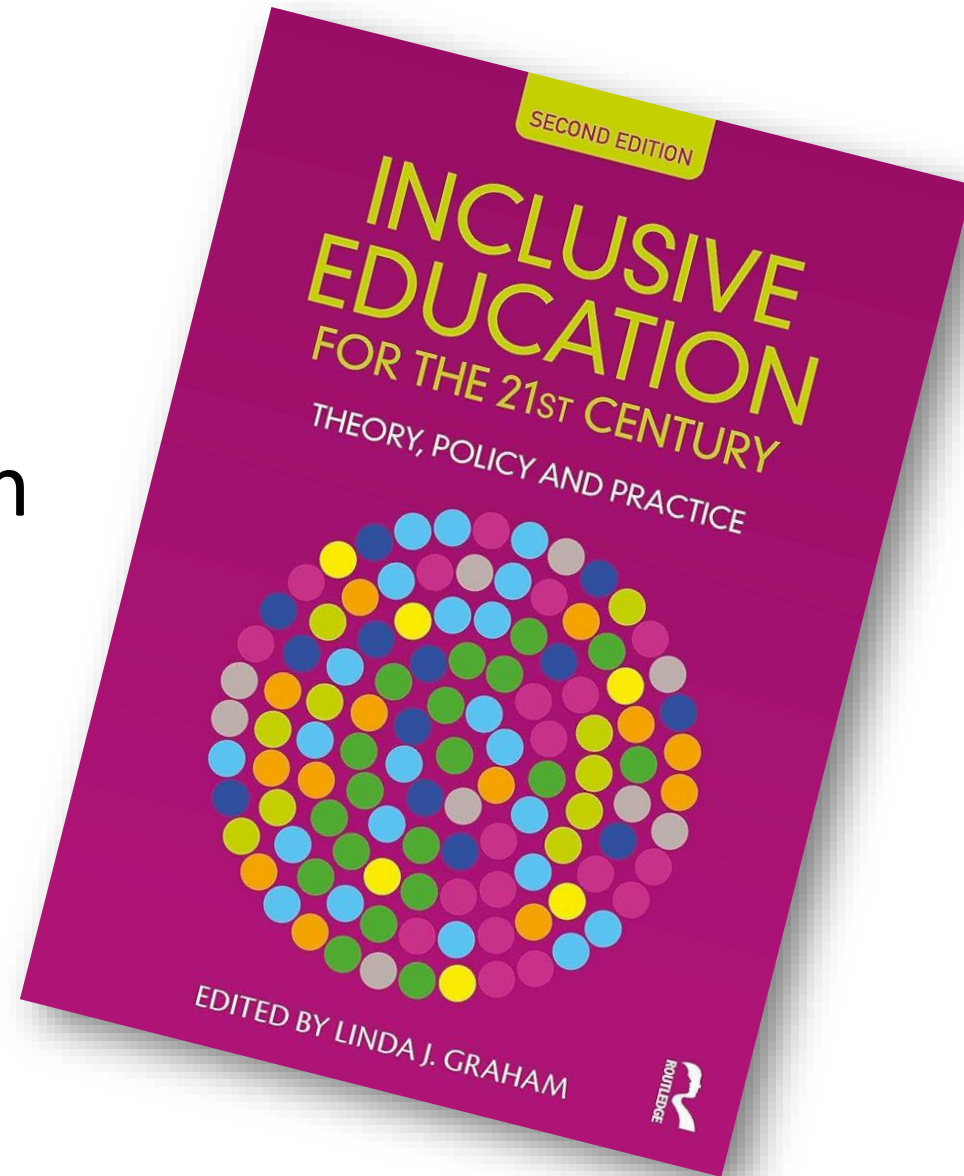
1. Monitoring and reflecting on the student's access, participation and learning progress
2. Evaluating the impact of curriculum priorities, instructional strategies, and adjustments
3. Identifying further professional learning and/or collaboration needed

(Swancutt, 2024)



Chapter 12...

Including students with complex learning profiles in grade-level curriculum



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Reflection...



Head

What have I learned?



Heart

How do I feel about this?



Feet

What action steps will I take?



That's a wrap!



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