

Curriculum Lead St. Stephens

How have you used the General capabilities to differentiate the teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of the students?

"Gifted and talented students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and aligned with their individual learning needs, strengths, interests and goals. ACARA acknowledges that there are numerous models of curriculum adjustment relating to gifted and talented students, although these are not referenced specifically in this advice."

Australian Curriculum

Stephen's ELC is a play based learning centre where we teach in flexible learning spaces. The teachers use Bloom's Taxonomy to assist when differentiating the work for students. The Gifted and Talented students are also given opportunities to develop their thinking skills through small group instructional settings at the time of need.

When planning this unit of work our year 2 teachers used the Australian Curriculum. The curriculum provided the perfect framework for the unit. To differentiate the teaching and learning for all students they focused on the general capabilities within the curriculum. The general capabilities provided a support for the teachers and allowed them to work out ways to enrich the learning by encouraging creative and critical thinking at a higher level for the gifted students. The students have been encouraged to research the history of St Stephen's School using a variety of sources.

The children have used the information from their research to understand the way the school is currently operating. They analysed the effect of developments on the history of the school and how they have affected our present classroom setup. They evaluated the effectiveness of research sources. They also developed creative ways of sharing the information learned through a variety of IT applications. They worked collaboratively with students in mixed ability groups once a week and then a like-minded group once a week, to develop an archive that will represent their learning at this time in history.

Grouping the gifted and talented students had a profound effect on the learning in the class. Their enthusiasm for learning was infectious and at the end of the unit ALL children displayed an amazing knowledge and understanding of the history of the school. There is no doubt that grouping the gifted and talented students together and also in mixed ability groups lifted the standard of learning for the whole class.

Most of the children in the gifted and talented group were operating at a level 3 in the general capability of critical and creative thinking. They were willing to manipulate abstract ideas about why certain things had changed and they made connections with the different style of classroom setup and the development of technology. They will complete the unit by predicting the possible future technological developments that may happen in the school. By focusing on the general capabilities in their teaching programs they have offered the students richer and more complex tasks. This has enabled the students to then operate at a higher level of thinking. This higher level of thinking has also been evident in the IT capabilities.

What models of gifted curriculum development do you use when planning with the teachers?

When planning with the teachers we use Bloom's model for classroom activities and the SAMR model to integrate technology into teaching and learning. There needs to be structure in the program to allow opportunities for the gifted students to accelerate through some of the learning.

With this unit of work we required the whole class to research the history of the school, but the gifted students' had different tasks to complete after the history excursion. They were required to write collaboratively on the different topics covered and to write two newspaper articles reflecting the past and the present. The article was published during the lesson in digital format. The standard of writing improved within the lesson as like-minded students were working together. The newspaper was published on the spot. This meant we were able to question the students at a higher level, which lead to a higher quality piece of writing.

Another goal for the year 2 students was oral language. The program allowed for the gifted children to report their findings in a news program setup. This required them to think about questions and answers that would inform the audience. The result of this will be presented to parents as a recorded news show.

When the gifted students worked together they were encouraged to think about the process of their learning. We listened to their ideas and encouraged them to think for themselves. The final lesson in the program is where they are asked to predict what the school might be like in 30 years'. Their prior learning will assist them to make predictions. It is important for them to be creative in their thinking. This will stimulate self-evaluation and reduce their dependency on teacher reinforcement.

Curriculum experiences for gifted learners need to be thoughtfully planned, written down and incorporate explicit assessment ". (Van Tassei-Baska , 2003)

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