



DIFFERENTIATION

Put simply, differentiation is the process of reducing the amount of work and reducing the level of work involved for students, as they move through various assessment and examination routes.

A need for this differentiation support for students with Down syndrome and an intellectual disability has been identified by parents, teachers and other educators.

It is particularly evident in the early years of second level where the lack of differentiated materials is having an adverse effect on the inclusion of children with Down syndrome in mainstream classes.

The syllabus for second level subjects, as presented in current text books and materials, is beyond the level of comprehension and reading ability of many students with Down syndrome.

To help support children, teachers and parents who are faced with this dilemma, a small, voluntary group of parents, teachers and other educators worked with Patricia Griffin, Education Officer at Down Syndrome Ireland, on the provision of some differentiated materials. The work was funded through the generosity of the Maynooth Students for Charity, Galway Cycle 2016.

A small, differentiated segment of each of the following subjects is available on the DSI website (www.downsyndrome.ie): Home Economics, English, Geography, Science, History and CSPE.

Down Syndrome Ireland welcomes any materials or methods from educators of students with Down syndrome for inclusion on the website, if deemed suitable.

Provision of this support will show teachers a way forward in their efforts to provide suitable materials, of an appropriate level, for their students. It will enable and encourage teachers to take responsibility for their students. It will lead to better learning outcomes for students with an intellectual disability. It will lead to improved inclusion in mainstream classes and pupils are less likely to be marginalised.

Down Syndrome Ireland are indebted to the parents, teachers and educators who participated so willingly in this project. Included were:

Cara Morgan, Esther Loakman, Gerard O'Carroll, Lisa Cahill, Madeline Hickey, Margaret Egan, Margaret Farrell, Michael Schwartz, Nicola Hart, Paula de Paor and Sean O'Murchu.

Patricia Griffin,
Former Education Officer,
Down Syndrome Ireland.

IEP --- INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

Parents often ask----What is an IEP?

School staff can sometimes become so familiar with IEP's that they forget to explain that an IEP is simply a plan to help the child and also to help others involved in the child's education. It is a written document prepared for a named student.

It specifies the learning goals that are to be achieved by the student over a given period of time. It specifies the teaching strategies, resources and supports necessary to achieve those goals. The IEP documents additional interventions to those differentiated strategies being used in the classroom.

When the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004 (EPSEN) was passed it set out a framework for the preparation and implementation of IEP's in this country. The timing for this has not yet been agreed. However, though there is no legal requirement to provide an IEP for a student with special education needs, it is still considered best practice to do so.

The NCSE (National Council for Special Education) emphasises that an IEP provides evidence of agreed special interventions and records the strategies used to enable the child to progress.

An IEP identifies where the student is, where they are going, how they will get there and how to tell if the journey is successful.

It must be a practical working document, noting the main areas of need and how to tackle those needs. It gives teachers and parents an opportunity to share views about the particular need and how to set up strategies best suited to the child. In that way, it has to be individualised. It has to be child centred.

UNDER PREPARATION

Information needs to be gathered to provide a comprehensive student profile. It should specifically identify the current strengths and priority learning needs of the pupil.

Sources of information will be: parents, student, school, other professionals such as: Medical, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, Audiologist, Optician.

The Student Profile should also consider Personal and Social Skills, Cognitive Ability, Motor Skills, Language/Communication, Literacy/Numeracy, Attitude/Motivation, Access to the Curriculum.



WHO DOES THIS WORK?

In some schools there is an IEP Co-ordinator.

In others, the class teacher or the resource teacher or the learning support teacher becomes the co-ordinator.

Sometimes, small informal meetings take place, leading on to a more formal meeting.

It helps if parents are involved at an early stage because then parents have opportunities to share their priorities and concerns in advance of the meeting. Parents will then commit more freely to the plan having had a real share in its preparation.

In all cases the IEP should be agreed and discussed with parents before being finalised.

THE PLAN

The child's current level of performance is noted to help identify priority learning needs and to track progress. Priority learning needs are for those areas where the child is experiencing difficulty. It is important to concentrate on a realistic number of the most serious needs.

TARGETS should relate directly to those priority needs.

A target should always clearly specify the desired learning outcome. Targets are used where the student needs additional help. Less complex skills come before the more complex ones.



WRITING THE TARGETS MEANS IDENTIFYING:

- What the child will do
- Conditions under which the child will perform the task
- Materials and supports required
- Time frame

If a teacher asks: "What do I want this student to be able to do in 1 month's time?" there will be purposeful planning.

STRATEGIES

Targets are about what the child will be able to do. Strategies are about what the adults will do to help the child achieve their targets.

Teachers should state the strategies and it should be clear to all involved WHO is responsible for the implementation of the target.

Conditions need to be outlined, such as what the environment is? Is it the school yard, resource room or classroom for example.

Criteria need to be set for the student to demonstrate both the level of accuracy and quantity, for example: to read 8 words out of 10.

Targets and supporting strategies may need to be shared within staff, for example; if certain attention seeking behaviours are to be ignored, it will be helpful if all staff are aware and so there is a whole-school approach.

Particularly when dealing with behavioural issues, strategies need to be very concrete, for example; Which adults are monitoring the behaviour? What rewards will be given? By whom?

Goals should be set high but at an attainable level.



REVIEW

The Principal should arrange for a review at regular intervals. Parents should be involved in the review. They can input what happens at home and try to build on the work at school.

QUESTIONS FOR THE REVIEW

- Has the child reached the targets? Then move on to next target.
- Is he/she making progress towards the target?
- If target has not been met - they may request that the Principal arrange for such a review
- How can we divide it into smaller steps?
- Do teaching strategies need to be altered?
- Does the target need to be changed or set aside for a while?

If parents believe that the goals of the IEP are not being achieved and if a review has not occurred in the previous six months-- they may request the Principal to arrange for such a review.

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Identify words and concepts and target these ahead of time where possible.

Explicit teaching of vocabulary will prepare the student for learning and understanding.

Teach an understanding of words and concepts **through the use of actual objects** and progress from the concrete to the abstract.

Consistently **check understanding**.

Seat the student in **a position that facilitates the use of prompts, cues or other strategies** during learning and teaching.

Before initiating conversation it is important to ensure that the **student's attention has been secured**.

Use **a slower speech rate** if necessary as this facilitates the processing of information. However, it is important that the speech rate is not so slow as to lose the continuity of the message.

It may be necessary to **exaggerate and use gestures** when helping a student with a severe receptive language disorder understand the meaning of a word that symbolises an object or an action. Depending on the age of the student it sometimes helps to involve the students in selecting the strategy that works best for them.

Use pictures or photographs to reinforce and review the vocabulary that has been taught.

Use role play as a regular feature of language learning as this helps alternate speaker/listener roles.

An understanding of sentences is difficult for these students and often presents in the classroom with difficulties in following and poor oral comprehension. **Give simple directions in sentences** to provide students with experiences in understanding sentences (eg: 'Put the book on the table' etc). **Have students repeat** what they have heard to check understanding.

Activities such as conversations, discussions, radio/television broadcasts, puppetry, telephoning, reporting, interviewing, telling jokes/riddles, book reports and role playing can be used **to develop oral language activities**.

Co-operative learning can be used to encourage discussion.

Have **clear rules** stipulating that the verbal contributions of all students have **equal value**.

Be aware of the role that misunderstanding can have in **possible behaviour and/or social problems**.

As some students may have to **attend speech and language therapy sessions** during school time, try to ensure that students will not always be missing out on the same subject/activity.

Source URL: <http://www.sess.ie/node/138>

VISION

Visual impairments may make it difficult for children with Down syndrome focus on written work. Most children **without** Down syndrome focus very easily and very accurately on near targets and it is only as we approach middle age that we expect to experience difficulty in focusing at near.

However, over 70% of students with Down syndrome focus very poorly at near. This is often not adequately corrected by wearing glasses.

One of the leading researchers on vision in Down syndrome is Margaret Woodhouse, based in Cardiff. She says:

“It is important for teachers to acknowledge that, even if children wear glasses (including bifocals) successfully, or if they focus accurately without glasses, their visual acuity will still be below normal. Thus reading materials, for example, do not look the same to a child with Down syndrome as they do to his/her classroom peers. The material does not appear to have the same level of detail. Enlarging the print may help the child to access print more easily, but does not restore a ‘normal ‘ appearance to the material” (Woodhouse, 2005).

Woodhouse further recommends that all children with Down syndrome, whether they wear glasses or not, receive input from teachers for the visually impaired, to ensure that classroom materials are adequate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Use large print with good contrast (18-20pt font size, black on white)
- Use good, clear, colourful illustrations. Bold, saturated colours are better than pastels.
- Look critically at textbooks. Coloured print used for headings may not be easily seen. Key information presented in boxes may be difficult, as contrast is reduced by coloured backgrounds. Complex books often have fairly small print. (It’s easy to think the student doesn’t have the capacity to read and understand material, when actually they are struggling to see the words.)
- Remember this applies when the student is writing, as well as reading. They need to be writing on bold lines in marker pen.
- Consult a teacher for the visually impaired.

HEARING

89% of children with Down syndrome have some form of hearing impairment (Bull et al, 2011). Even a mild hearing impairment can mean that around one third of speech sounds are sub-audible. This could rise to half or two thirds of speech sounds in a noisy classroom environment.

Between 50 and 70% of children with Down syndrome suffer from fluctuating hearing loss caused by middle ear fluid (Bull et al, 2011). This means that hearing can be adequate one week, inadequate the next. Long intervals between hearing tests mean that these fluctuating problems are often overlooked, although they can have a significant impact on a student's ability to access the curriculum.

What can you do?

- Make sure that the student is sitting near the front of the classroom.
- Encourage the student to wear their hearing aids if needed.
- Give the student the benefit of the doubt if they appear not to be listening.
- Cue the student by name when giving an instruction or asking a question.
- Provide visual materials to support the spoken word, including visual timetables and pictures of the topic at hand.
- Use a buddy system, so that the student with Down syndrome is not left behind just because they missed an instruction.
- Pre-teach new material in a quiet setting, such as individual resource time.
- Alert the parent if there seems to be a change. Reduced hearing is often more evident in a noisy classroom than at home.
- Take advice from visiting teachers for the hearing impaired, and use a radio aid or sound-field system if recommended.

BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST ✓

	YES	NO
1. Attention seeking?		
a. Have they had a support assistant on hand at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Do they object when the assistant helps others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Have they been used to getting special treatment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Have they successfully used attention-seeking behaviours as avoidance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Do they enjoy being the centre of attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Angry or frustrated?		
a. Do they want to be the same as everybody else?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Are they unable to do the things that others can do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Are they being teased or bullied?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Are other people impatient or unable to understand what they want?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Do they adapt to different ways of working in different classes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Confused or uncertain?		
a. Are they unsure what they are expected to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Have they forgotten verbal instruction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Are they confused by different rules for different lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Are there unrealistic expectations of the student?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Have their capabilities been over or underestimated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Need to exert control?		
a. Do they refuse to cooperate on principle?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Are they given few opportunities to choose their own activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Do they feel under pressure and need a break?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Do they resent being withdrawn from class?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Lack maturity?		
a. Is their behaviour more appropriate for a younger student?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Do they lack age appropriate social skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Has immature behaviour been ignored or reinforced in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Lack social skills as a result of continual 1:1 support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Have they been over-supported/protected in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



SESS Differentiation Template

Using the template below, consider these aspects of the lesson given to your students so that all learners can be included in order that they can participate in and benefit from the lesson.

KEY WORDS TO BE TAUGHT / PRE-TAUGHT			

1. DIFFERENTIATE BY CONTENT (In what ways can I vary what I am teaching?)		
<i>(A) Complexity of content: (concrete, symbolic, abstract)</i>		
<i>Concrete</i>	<i>Symbolic</i>	<i>Abstract</i>
<i>(B) Variety of resources</i>		
<i>(C) Variety of learning environments</i>		

KEY CONCEPTS IN THE LESSON (OBJECTIVES)		
<i>What students must know or be able to do</i>	<i>What students should know or be able to do</i>	<i>What students could know or be able to do</i>

2. DIFFERENTIATE BY PROCESS (How will I teach the lesson?)

3. DIFFERENTIATE BY OUTCOME / PRODUCT (How will the student demonstrate understanding?)

FINALLY - ANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR THIS LESSON?



Down Syndrome Ireland

National Leadership Local Support