

Student Support Group Guidelines 2011

Every
child,
every
opportunity



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1 Aims

The Student Support Group can make recommendations to the principal for their consideration and potential implementation

The aims of the Student Support Group are to:

- ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for the student, work together to establish shared goals for the student's educational future
- plan reasonable adjustments for the student to access the curriculum
- provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout the student's school life
- monitor the progress of the student.

2 Responsibilities



In order to achieve these aims it is the responsibility of the Student Support Group to:

- identify the student's needs
- determine any adjustments to be made to the curriculum
- plan an appropriate educational program
- develop an Individual Learning Plan
- discuss the plan with teachers and provide support to implement the learning plan
- provide advice to the principal concerning the additional educational needs of the student and the types of resources required to meet these needs
- review and evaluate the student's program on a regular basis as determined by the group, and at other times if requested by any member of the group.

Refer to the Curriculum and Assessment section of the students with Disabilities website for further information: www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/assessment/default.htm

It is essential that a cooperative working relationship is developed and maintained within the Group and with the school. The Student Support Group represents a partnership in the educational planning process between the parent/guardian/carer(s), the student and the school.

3 Membership



A Student Support Group is to consist of:

- the parent/guardian/carer(s) of the student;
- a parent/guardian/carer(s) advocate (where chosen by the parent/guardian/carer(s));
- a class teacher (primary) or teacher(s) nominated as having responsibility for the student (secondary);
- the principal or nominee (to act as chairperson); and
- the student (where appropriate).

The Student Support Group may invite input from any other person with knowledge of the student or with information relevant to the educational or social needs of the student.

The number and choice of the consultants should be agreed to by all members of the Student Support Group. The information provided by the consultants will be for the consideration of the group in decision making. Consultants do not have a role in the final decision-making process of the group.

Where a student with a disability is attending two schools, the Student Support Group should be convened by the school where the student attends the majority of time. The principal (or nominee) of the other school is also to be a member of the Student Support Group.

Where a student is being assessed through the Year 6-7 Review process, the secondary school in which the student anticipates enrolling should be invited to join the Student Support Group.



4.1 Principal

When a parent/guardian/carer seeks to enrol a child with a disability into a school, the principal provides them with information about specific support available to facilitate the student's participation in the school's education program.

It is the responsibility of the principal to facilitate the collaborative processes of the Student Support Group by offering support to all members and ensuring their equal participation. For this to occur, the principal may enlist the support of an interpreter or other community support groups (where appropriate).

The principal or principal's nominee shall convene and chair Student Support Group meetings on a regular basis. The principal ensures that accurate records of the Student Support Group meetings are kept and provided to all members.

4.2 Classroom teacher

The classroom teacher will provide the Student Support Group with current information regarding the student's progress and assist in determining future educational goals.

It is the classroom teacher's responsibility to ensure that the student has access to the school's educational programs and implements the classroom content of the Individual Learning Plan. Other staff working with the student do so under the direction of a nominated classroom teacher.

4.3 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)

Parent/guardian/carer(s) play a vital role in the Student Support Group. They have a holistic understanding of the child and provide ongoing involvement in their education. Parent/guardian/carer(s) are often in the best position to provide information on the effectiveness and practicality of particular strategies and programs. They provide knowledge and experience of previous events that may influence programming decisions. Parent/guardian/carer(s) are able to contribute to the goals and strategies that will support the education of their child.

4.4 Student

Where appropriate the student should be part of the program development process. In some cases, the student's age or severity of disability may restrict direct participation. However, in all cases, the preferences and interests of the student, regardless of how they are expressed, should be actively considered when planning programs.



4.5 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s) Advocate

A parent/guardian/carer may be accompanied and supported by an advocate to assist their full participation in planning and supporting the student's program and in making decisions about the student.

The role of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate in the Student Support Group is a supportive and enabling one. It may include:

- encouraging the sharing of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' knowledge, skills and perceptions with the Student Support Group
- discussing any difficulties or uncertainties being experienced by the parent/guardian/ carer(s) in participating in the Student Support Group
- assisting the development of a co-operative and collaborative working relationship between the parent/guardian/carer(s) and the school community
- assisting the parent/guardian/ carer(s) to understand Department of Education and Early Childhood Development procedures
- linking the parent/guardian/ carer(s) with relevant services and organisations.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian/carer(s) to choose an advocate. A parent/guardian/carer(s) advocate may be a friend, supportive community member, a member of the family or formal advocate. The advocate is not to be in receipt of a fee. See page 22 of the Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines 2010 for a list of organisations that provide parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocates.

4.6 Interpreter

Where necessary, an interpreter (in languages other than English and sign language) should be present at the Student Support Group meetings. Interpreters are not members of the Student Support Group. The principal will assist in obtaining the services of an interpreter.

4.7 Consultants

The Student Support Group should ensure that input is obtained from other personnel who have relevant expertise and/or information to:

- assist in the establishment of educational goals for the student
- provide support in the development of educational programs
- help determine appropriate strategies to implement agreed programs.

The Department of Education provides Student Support Services Officers, a group of professionals who provide support to students and schools. Their aim is to enhance school capacity to improve student outcomes and provide continuity of care to all students, and assist in the development of Individual

Learning Plans and the defining of appropriate curriculum support.

Student Support Services Officers include:

- guidance officers
- psychologists
- social workers
- visiting teachers (for visually, hearing and physically impaired students)
- speech pathologists
- curriculum consultants.

In addition, persons who could make a valuable contribution to the Student Support Group include:

- Department of Human Services staff
- special needs teachers
- learning area or year level co-ordinators
- medical practitioners
- paramedical practitioners
- preschool teachers and/or advisers and/or early intervention staff
- special education consultants
- specialist school staff
- student welfare co-ordinators
- education support staff
- teachers who have taught the student previously and/or other members of staff
- visiting teachers.

Schools are advised to work closely together to make the best use of the available resources and expertise within the local area, for example, the establishment of ongoing links between regular and special schools.

Role/Responsibilities of the Student Support Group

Principal/Principal nominee

- Ensures SSG meetings are held on a regular basis
- Facilitates the meeting
- Ensures that accurate minutes of each meeting are taken and provided to all SSG members.

Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)

- Provides a holistic view of their child
- Provides information on the effectiveness of past strategies and programs
- Contributes to the goals and strategies of their child's educational program
- Chooses an advocate if required.

Ongoing Student Support Group

- Share information about the student's interests, strengths, skills, preferences, abilities and preferred learning styles
- Share an understanding of the learning environment
- Set educational goals and strategies appropriate for the individual student
- Regularly monitor the achievement and progress of the student
- Provide advice to the principal on the specific educational needs of the student, and the most appropriate use of available resources.

Classroom teacher

- Provides the SSG with current information on the student's progress
- Assists in determining future educational goals.

Student

- The views of the student should be sought and reflected in the learning and teaching arrangements
- May attend the SSG meeting if appropriate.

The number and choice of additional participants should be agreed to by all members of the SSG, however, they do not have a role in the final decision making process of the group.

Consultant

- Provides additional knowledge of the student's educational needs.

Interpreter

- Assists with communication at SSG meetings.

Parent/Guardian/Carer(s) Advocate

- Assists and supports the parent/guardian/carers (parent/ guardian/ carer(s) advocates are not to be in receipt of a fee)

5 Operation



Ongoing Student Support Groups will be arranged in Victorian government schools for all students with disabilities.

The principal will provide the parent/guardian/carer(s) with a copy of these guidelines, the Program for Students with Disabilities guidelines, and any related school policy documents concerning the education of students with disabilities. This will assist the parent/guardian/carer(s) to participate fully in the process.

Meetings

Sufficient time must be allowed for the Student Support Group participants to prepare before meetings are convened, including time for the parent/guardian/carer(s) and parent/guardian/ carer(s) advocate to meet. Meetings should be arranged at times that enable all members to be present.

Student Support Group meetings should be convened on a regular basis (at least once per term) and as soon as possible following a request by a Student Support Group member.

The principal needs to ensure that efficient and effective meeting arrangements are in place. See page 18-19 for example.

All discussions and reports considered by, or arising from, the Student Support Group process are to be treated in the strictest confidence and confined to members of the group, unless all members agree otherwise.

Concerns

Concerns regarding the process used by the Student Support Group or the management of resources by the school should be resolved, if possible, with the principal. If the issue(s) cannot be resolved at the school level, the concern should be forwarded in writing to their Regional Director. Refer to the list of Department of Education Regional Offices on page at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/structure/regions.htm.

6 Planning the Individual Learning Plan



The focus of the Student Support Group is on educational planning and monitoring of a student's progress. This planning process will enable schools to facilitate optimum learning outcomes for every student with a disability. To best support the educational outcomes of students with disabilities and additional learning needs the Student Support Group is advised to use the following sequence.

6.1 Identifying the student's needs

Sharing an understanding of the student as a learner

Parent/guardian/carer(s) and teachers are committed to the best educational outcomes for the student and will have information to exchange concerning the student and the learning process. Parent/guardian/carer(s) bring information about the student's skills, teaching methods that have been successful and important background information. Teachers bring expertise in designing and delivering an educational program. Consultants who have an understanding and knowledge of the student as a learner may enhance the information sharing process. The purpose of information sharing is to bring together understandings and relevant information, and identify the implications for the student's educational program. Shared information will form the foundation for deciding what to teach, how to teach and when to teach, and how to deliver the most effective educational program to maximise outcomes for the student. It will also help provide the basis for further assessment.

Student strengths, skills, preferences and abilities

Through direct observation and assessment the parent/guardian/carer(s), teachers and other relevant personnel can identify the student's interests, strengths, skills, preferences and abilities.

Identifying the most appropriate learning style

It is most important to identify the student's preferred learning styles and rates of learning. All students have preferences in the way in which they interpret information, make connections between learning and demonstrate that learning. Major differences in learning styles include learning by experimenting, reflecting, doing or feeling, and learning individually or within a group. Enabling students to be involved in learning tasks in ways which are most comfortable for them, and which give them the opportunity to face challenges, will enhance the quality of their learning and ultimately the outcomes they will achieve.

Understanding the learning environment

The Student Support Group will need to consider the school environment including the layout of the school, location of toilets and classrooms and movement between classrooms and the playground. Equipment requirements for a student with specific physical needs, for example seating or tables, should be ordered early to ensure they are available when the student commences school.

The cost of equipment will need to be budgeted for within the Student Resource Package.

Template 1 may assist schools to gather and analyse relevant information to develop a profile of the student as a learner.

Template 1: Understanding the student

Sharing existing information

Relevant activities & environments	Current strengths skills & successes	Most effective teaching strategy
Home		
School		
Recreation		
Community		

6.2 Determining adjustments that need to be made to the curriculum

Focusing on planning

The primary focus for all students is preparation for future education and training, employment, or desired lifestyle. When planning for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, it is especially important to maintain a focus on the student taking an active role in the community in the future. It is essential to incorporate this focus in planning the immediate program.

Setting educational goals

The Student Support Group considers the student's future aspirations and sets annual, long and short term educational goals. The important aims when setting educational goals are to:

- ensure that all parties are in agreement with the goals
- ensure the goals are a priority for the student
- build on the strengths and skills of the student
- understand the difference between long, annual and short term goals
- ensure the implementation of all actions to achieve goals is monitored.

Long term goals

Long term goals are broad statements of expected learning outcomes reflecting the social, academic and life skills required by the student, e.g. to live independently, or access further education and training options. Careful recognition of future needs is necessary in all educational planning.

Annual goals

Annual goals are specific statements describing the expected behaviour or skill to be achieved by the end of the school year. Annual goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

Short term goals

Short term goals are developed by identifying the sub-skills that are required for a student to achieve a long term or annual goal, e.g. the ability to successfully validate a public transport ticket. Short term goals specify what is to be achieved in periods ranging from a week through to a semester. They also need to be specific. Short term goals are set/reviewed at each Student Support Group meeting.



Setting goals appropriate for individual students

All goals for students with disabilities and additional learning needs should be:

- designed to ensure the participation of the student within their classroom programs
- based on curriculum content and experiences similar to those for same-age peers
- fully inclusive where possible.

Template 2 may assist schools to identify information that will support the development of educational goals.

Template 2: Goal setting

Long term and annual goals

By end of this year	Mid-point	Leaving school

Short term goals – specific, measurable, achievable

End of week	End of term	End of year

The Student Support Group sets goals (annual, long and short-term) that:

- enable the student to undertake a meaningful educational program
- are realistic, achievable and written in such a manner that it is possible to measure the extent of the student's progress
- describe the expected learning outcomes for a student at the end of the school year (annual goal) and can be measured against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards
- describe the actual performance expected at the end of the year, and the level of performance the student should exhibit to show successful achievement of the goal
- enable the school to effectively report the academic progress of students with disabilities and impairments in a similar manner to reporting the learning of all other students in the school.

In ongoing planning for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, critical transition stages (including preschool to primary school, primary to secondary and secondary to post-school) options are linked to specific goals. Careful planning for these times is also necessary.

6.3 Completing and implementing an Individual Learning Plan

Deciding on what needs to be taught

The Student Support Group is encouraged to utilise resources available or the Curriculum website. Further advice is also available in the Student Wellbeing Curriculum Toolkit:
www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/assessment/default.htm

It is important that content taught to students with disabilities and additional learning needs is related to what the rest of the class is learning. Choice of activities should reflect the individual needs of the student. The activities should be comprehensive and balanced. It is important that activities are age appropriate, relevant and functional. A sufficiently broad repertoire of activities should be selected to permit student choice of activity.

Selecting priorities for the content to be taught

Students with disabilities and additional learning needs may learn at differing rates from their peers. It is vital that maximum teaching time is spent on identified priorities.

Activities given greatest priority need to be those that build on and extend the strengths of the student and form the foundation for later more complex tasks.

Pedagogy

Students with disabilities and additional learning needs are often more likely to require more practice, exercises and repetition to consolidate learning. Matching the best way of delivering the curriculum with the student's individual learning style is important. There are many different learning styles that are effective for students with disabilities and additional learning needs. Teachers should be skilled in the diverse range of teaching methods available and in selecting the most appropriate learning style for the student's preferred way of learning.

Delivery of curriculum is seen as the next step in the planning process.

Template 3 may enable schools to succinctly map a student's program plan across domains of influence such as home and school.

Template 3: Program planning

What needs to be taught	Where	Activities
1	Home	
	School	
	Recreation	
	Community	
2	Home	
	School	
	Recreation	
	Community	
3	Home	
	School	
	Recreation	
	Community	



Determining organisational strategies

Organisational strategies need to address the questions of when, where, by whom and with whom the curriculum is to be delivered. For example, the appropriateness of the environment for the student's learning, the amount of time necessary to teach an activity and the amount of time required for practice will need to be considered.

Other factors such as the need for intensive teaching times to coincide with the times of day when the student learns best, and maximising the time spent in active student engagement, also need to be considered.

Flexible groupings of students within classrooms will allow for a variety of learning groups for students. Programs for students with disabilities and additional learning needs may include individual learning, small group learning, peer and cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning arrangements consistent with those used for other class members.

Organisational strategies will also need to be flexible. Team-teaching is to be encouraged as is the sharing of resources between schools, including local specialist schools.

Additional support may be provided by Student Support Service Officers.

Template 4 may assist the Student Support Group to document a focus on organisational skills if appropriate.

Template 4: Implementation

Organisational strategies

[illegible]

6.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Developing evaluation and review procedures

All schools are required to measure, rate and report the achievement and progress of students. The evaluation/monitoring/review phase of the planning sequence for students with disabilities and additional learning needs is most critical. Evaluation enables progress to be measured, the effectiveness of the program to be assessed and new goals to be developed.

It is important that the educational plans for students with disabilities and additional learning needs is constantly monitored so that it is responsive to the changing needs and educational progress of the student, and can be adjusted accordingly.

The review process needs to include all relevant people as agreed to by the Student Support Group. Where progress appears to be minimal, it may be helpful for the group to adopt problem solving strategies that will help reassess such things as goals and targets, as well as the appropriateness of activities and methods used.

On the completion of this process the Student Support Group will be in a position to offer advice to the principal as to how to better meet the educational needs of the student.

Where students in the Program for Students with Disabilities are deemed capable of assessment against the standards of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards they should be included in the student achievement tables.

Where students in the Program for Students with Disabilities are deemed not capable of assessment against the standards of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards the format for assessment should follow that used for reporting the progress of students with disabilities and additional learning needs in specialist settings.

Template 5 can support schools to monitor the current progress of the student at the same time as mapping the future learning opportunities for the student.



Template 5: Evaluation

Student Support Group

[illegible]

7 Transition to post-school options



A student's final years at school should culminate in a planned progression into participation in adult and community life. This is the fundamental goal of the Student Support Group.

In order to establish a range of options, transition should be part of the core planning of the last four or five years of school so that students and parent/guardian/carer(s) will have choices and feel comfortable about the decisions to be made. Transition planning should encompass three major areas of adult life – education and training, employment, and independent living.

Successful transition planning is based on a partnership between parent/guardian/carer(s) and school, and involves considering the current skill levels of the student, the knowledge, skills and attitudes a student will need to operate successfully in the post-school environment, and the provision of appropriate strategies to ensure the needed skills are developed.

By establishing appropriate linkages to service providers such as employment placement officers or higher education disability liaison officers, and inviting representatives to Student Support Group meetings, agencies can increasingly become part of the planning process. This ensures a seamless transition to the appropriate post-school option.



The Managed Individual Pathways program ensures that all students 15 years and older in Victorian government schools (including students with disabilities in both regular and specialist schools) have current individual pathway plans and associated support to enable a successful transition through the post-compulsory years to further education, training or secure employment. For further information see:

www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/mips/default.htm

In addition, students may be eligible to participate in the Futures for Young Adults Program after they reach 18. This is a joint initiative between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education where funding may be available, if needed, to assist students to access a post-school option.

Further information is available at:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/being_part_of_my_community/futures_for_young_adults

Centrelink also offers a range of options to young people with disabilities and those planning to pursue further education or job training. Further information is available at:

www.centrelink.gov.au

Sample 1

Student Support Group Meeting (checklist)

Date of meeting / /

Members of Student Support Group

- Parent(s)
- School Staff
- Student Support Services Officers
- Others

Understanding the student

Information presented:

- Parent report
- Medical/Professional reports
- Current/previous school progress
- Other agencies

Student characteristics:

- Interests
- Strengths
- Learning Style
- Extracurricular activities

Goal setting

Long term/annual planning:

- Expectations of parents/student
- Expectations of School
- Post Primary/Post Secondary options

Short term planning:

- Curriculum Areas (VELS)
- Current achievement
- Specific Strategies
- Dissemination of information

Program planning:

- Curriculum priorities
- Learning style
- Special considerations

Implementation:

- Staff roles
- Time lines
- Environmental changes required

Evaluation and monitoring:

- Record keeping
- Progressive assessments/reports
- Measurement of goal attainment

Student Support Group

Sample 2

Education Programming for Students with Disabilities and Additional Learning Needs (Checklist)

Gather information: (as much as possible)

- from previous school
- centres attended
- family
- other agencies
- student's strengths and skills

Long-term goals

- expectations of parents
- expectations of student
- expectations of school
- transition to post school options

Short-term goals

- individualised program

Implementing strategies

- adjust curriculum to individual needs
- flexible approach to time-tabling of the program
- keeping staff informed

Evaluation and monitoring

- regular briefings with coordinators/teachers/student
- weekly meeting with teachers/education support staff/student
- record keeping
- progress reports regularly from teachers
- support group meetings/feedback from home

