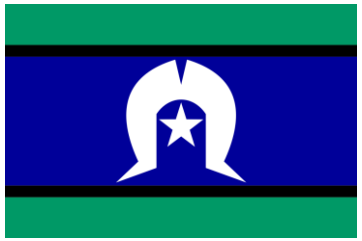
CHALLENGING THE USE OF LIFE SKILLS OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY: A PRACTICAL APPROACH.

Sam Widmer – Homebush Boys High School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land and waters upon which Darling Harbour and surrounding areas of Cockle Bay and Tumbalong Park are situated.

First Peoples have been living, meeting and practicing culture in Darling Harbour for thousands of years. Darling Harbour was originally called 'Tumbalong', which means 'place where seafood is found' in Dharug language.

For more than 7,000 years Darling Harbour was a frontier; a boundary between the Wangal and Gadigal clans of the coastal Eora people who used the harbour for food and transport up the Parramatta River.

Specifically, the ICC Sydney stands and operates on Gomora, land of the Gadigal clan of the Eora Nation.

We acknowledge that Darling Harbour is located upon Gadigal land and waterways. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Gadigal Elders past, present and emerging.

HOMEBUSH BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

Homebush Boys High School is mainstream boys high school, founded in 1936, sitting on the land of the Wann-gal clan.

Approximately 1000 students from year 7-12

In 2021 a Support Unit for students with Autism was created with 3 classes (21 students and 6 faculty staff)

It is growing to 5 classes in 2024

In 2023, we started using mainstream outcomes for our Year 9 students, starting with Science. We wanted to share our results.

WHAT WE NOTICED

The Life Skills syllabus is too often the default setting when teaching students with disabilities.

Proper consultation with parents/carers, students, teachers and agencies does not occur as much as it should.

Parents/carers are at the mercy of teachers as they often do not understand the choices available to them.

Parents/carers rely on teachers to provide informed advice when choosing a learning pathway.

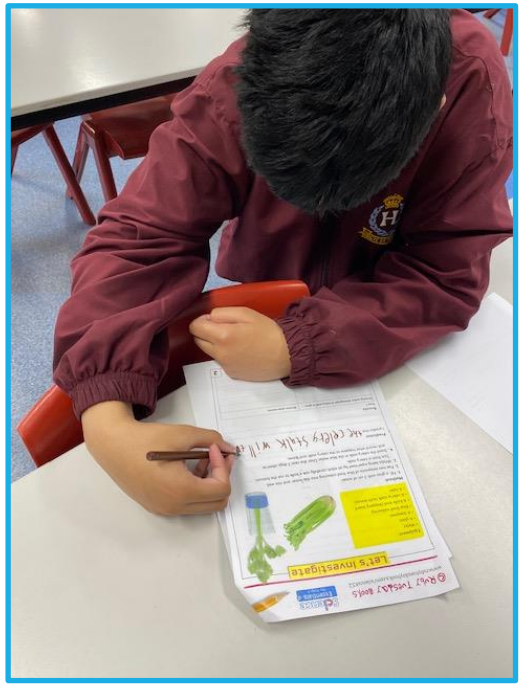
THERE IS A PLACE FOR LIFE SKILLS OUTCOMES

There is definitely a place for Life Skills outcomes in any school setting.

A real positive of our education system in NSW is that there are options in terms of setting, syllabus and assessment for every student.

However, when it becomes the norm to place any student with a disability on the Life Skills syllabus, without proper consultation, then a lack of urgency for meaningful assessment can occur.

This acts as a disservice to students with a disability, by not giving them a way to express their knowledge to the best of their ability.

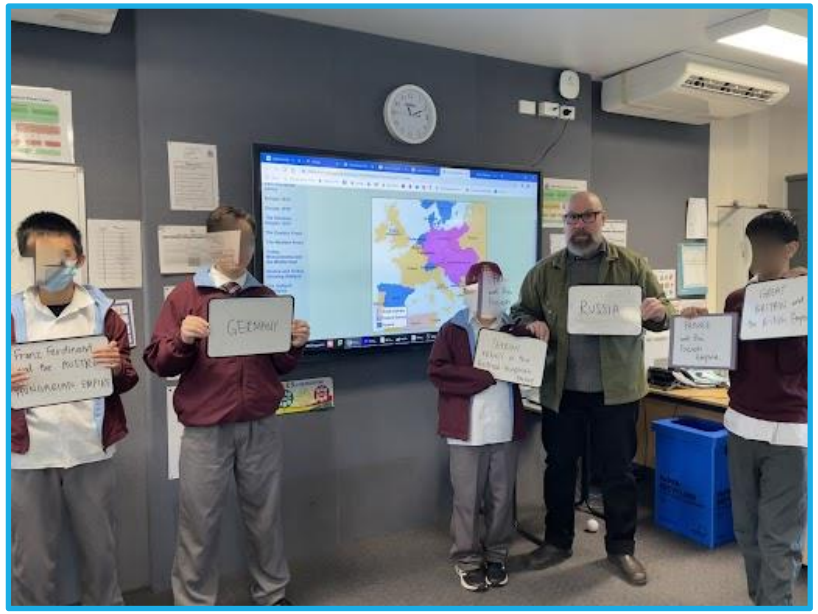


QUICK DISCUSSION – 1 MINUTE

In pairs, discuss:

1. What syllabus do your students use?
2. How is student knowledge demonstrated in your setting?

Then, share your findings with another pair.



WHAT THE NSW SYLLABUS STATES

Collaborative curriculum planning:

Collaborative curriculum planning is the process to determine the most appropriate curriculum options and adjustments for a student with disability.

Collaborative curriculum planning should take place within the broader context of personalised planning that includes interventions and other supports to address identified student learning and support needs.

This involves a team who has significant knowledge and understanding of the student. The team comprises parents/carers, teachers and other significant individuals in the student's life. It also includes the student themselves.

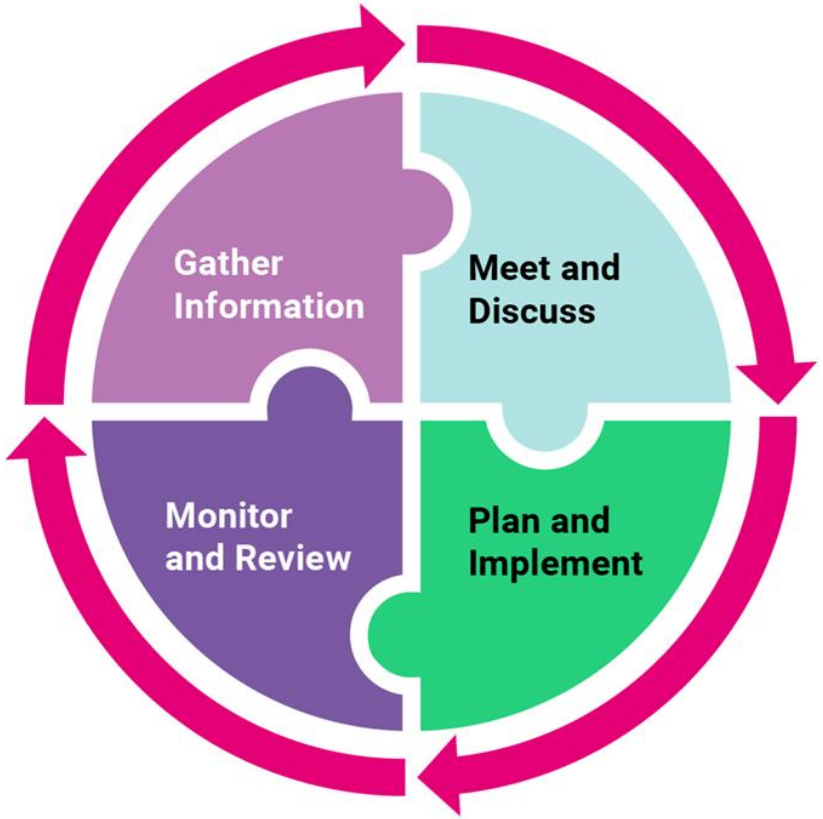
This collaborative process does not happen enough

Individual Education Plan (IEP) process

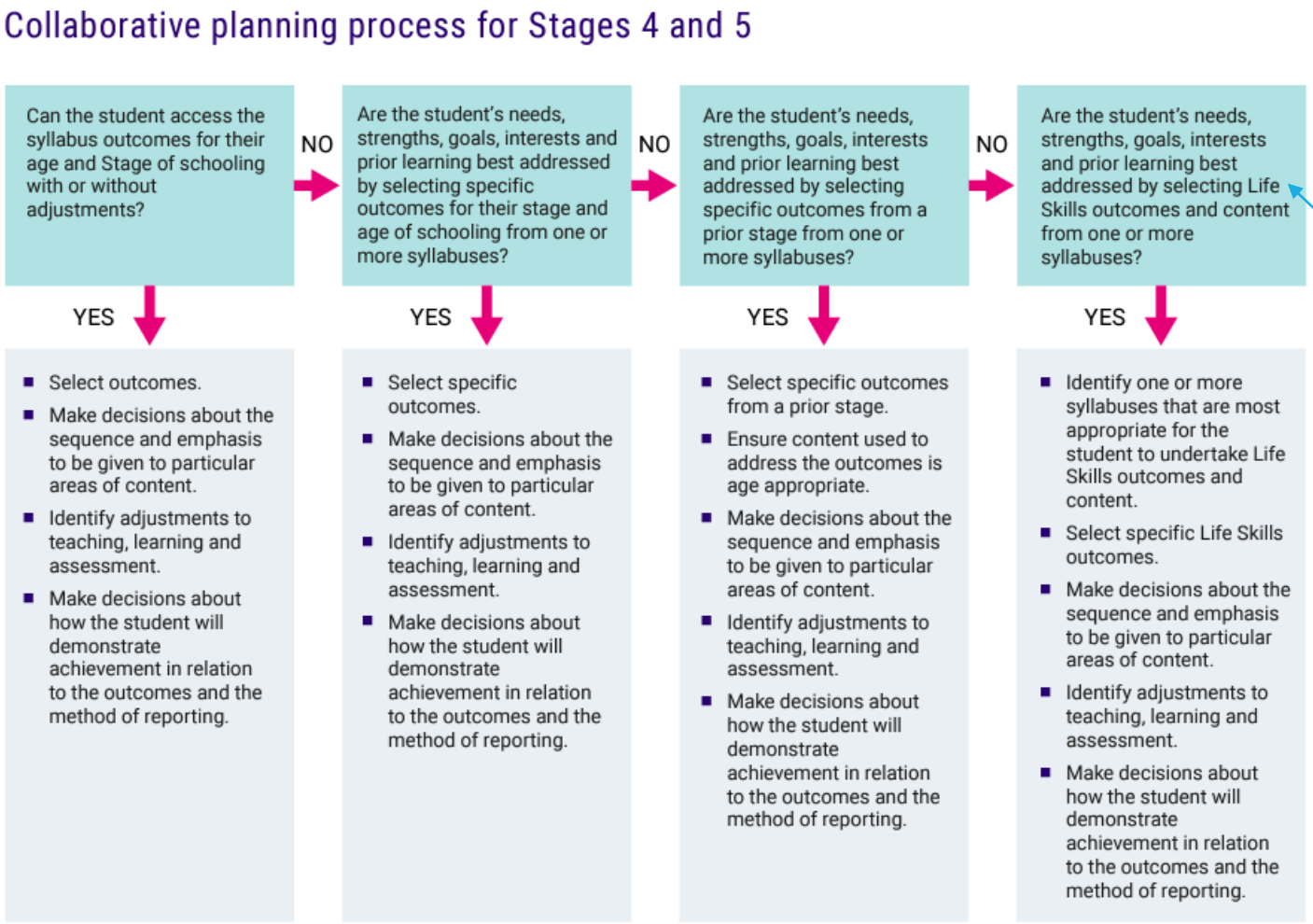
The expert teacher and relevant stakeholders

Student-led IEP process

COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM PLANNING

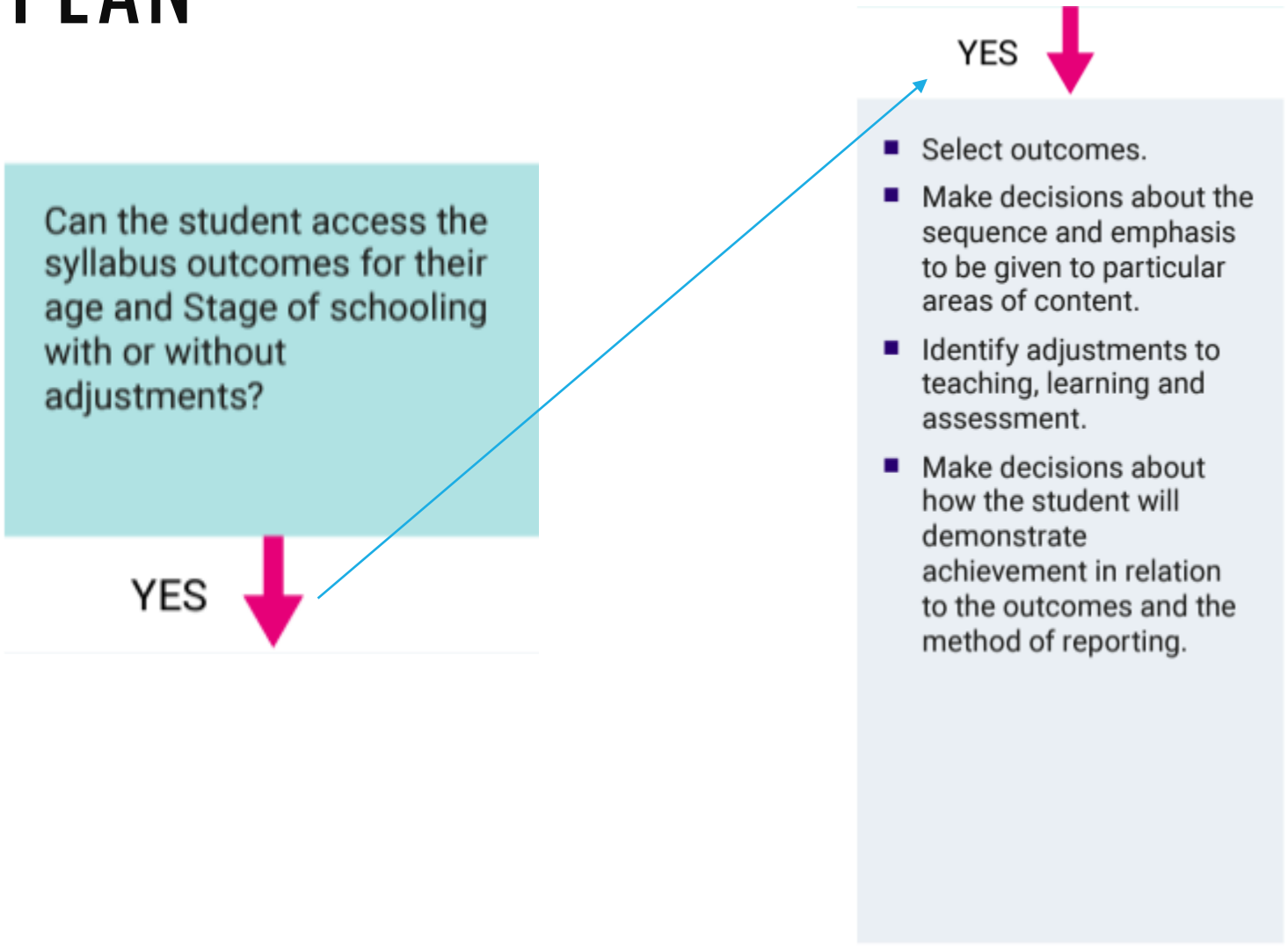


COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM PLANNING DIAGRAM



Life Skills is the **4th** option in the Collaborative Curriculum Planning Diagram

FOLLOWING THE COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM PLAN



"With or without adjustments" gives teachers a large scope to use mainstream syllabus outcomes.

EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS

1. Find your same partner and list as many adjustments that could be made to support a student with disability.

30 seconds for each person. Your partner will hold up a finger for each answer.

E.g. completing a cloze passage with the assistance of a word bank or using enlarged text for a student with a vision impairment.

2. Put your hands up if your pair listed 10 adjustments or more.

THINK ABOUT...

Think about a student you know on the Life Skills syllabus.

Ask yourself if they are capable of achieving mainstream syllabus outcomes with or without the right adjustments.

If they are, then why are they not doing it?

slido

What are some barriers to achieving mainstream outcomes for students with disability?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING MAINSTREAM OUTCOMES

Not every student in my class is achieving at the same level

Staff perceptions on whether or not SWD can learn

Lack of experience and expertise in teaching SWD

Anxious about student behaviour

School system does not support an inclusive culture

High expectations are not held towards SWD

I don't have time to modify/adjust/change my assessments and resources

Evidence-based teaching strategies for SWD are not used by the teacher due to lack of knowledge

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

NSW Department of Education's Principles of Inclusive Practice for Students with Disability (2019):

1. Student agency and self determination
2. Parent and carer inclusion
3. Social and cultural inclusion
4. Curriculum inclusion
5. Workforce capability for inclusion
6. System inclusion

How many Principles of Inclusive Practice does your setting meet?

Principle	Description
1. Student agency and self determination	Students have a voice, and are supported to express their views. The capacity of students to solve problems, set goals, make decisions and self-advocate is valued and developed. Students are involved in decisions that affect them.
2. Parent and carer inclusion	Teachers and schools work in partnership with the student's parents/carers and support people to achieve the best outcomes for their child's education. Teachers and schools will use collaborative approaches to plan and achieve agreed and measurable outcomes for every student.
3. Social and cultural inclusion	All students are welcomed and supported to build relationships with their peers. The school community embraces all learners, has respect for, and values diversity. Leaders in schools and those supporting schools model inclusion in all aspects of their work.
4. Curriculum inclusion	Students with disability are supported to access the same curriculum and syllabus outcomes as their peers, in developmentally appropriate ways. Critical to this is student-centred education planning, reasonable adjustments and differentiated teaching, learning and assessment activities.
5. Workforce capability for inclusion	Students with disability have equitable access to quality teaching that meets individual needs, delivers excellent educational outcomes and empowers students and their families with agency and choice to improve their school experience.
6. System inclusion	Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and everyday practices in NSW public schools. Inclusive practice is evident in classrooms, schools, school leadership, and across all staff who support schools.

LIGHTBULB MOMENT

Formative assessments in stage 4 classes were demonstrating success and competence in learning activities across all KLAs (writing samples, quiz results, exit slips, class discussions/debates)

Success was being achieved and demonstrated in student reports and through teacher feedback to students and parents.

Integration of several students into mainstream subject areas suggested there was an appetite for knowledge

Student engagement levels were strong and staff held high aspirations for the students

A conversation with a student helped to change our approach:

“Why am I in the Support Unit when my IQ is higher than most people in my mainstream class”

His perception of students with Autism meant he felt undervalued

This resonated with me because we have always told our students that they are capable and clever learners. They express their knowledge in different ways and can benefit from a smaller class size. However, they needed practical proof for it to stick.

Opportunity to prove we have an inclusive culture by pushing students to achieve the best they can.

It started with our Science lessons.

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

1. Surveying students and parents to gauge and encourage self-determination.	**5. Specialist Science teachers timetabled to team-teach 1 lesson a week with special and inclusive education teachers.**
2. Using Stage 5 outcomes and content from the mainstream Science Syllabus.	**6. The use of evidence-based teaching strategies in the classroom that support SWD.**
3. Access to mainstream assessment tasks to modify into accessible formats on a digital platform.	**7. Collaboration with faculties and specialist teachers for lesson plans, assessments, setting up practical experiments, excursions and knowledge sharing.**
4. Weekly lessons in laboratories embedded into the whole school timetable with no special booking required.	**8. Celebrating success with formal recognition at assemblies and in school reporting structures to create a culture of high expectations.**

The planning process takes time and desired inclusive systems are not achieved instantly

It takes time to break down barriers

Whole school buy-in needs to be cultivated – Collective responsibility - staff need to be onboard

1. SURVEYING STUDENTS AND PARENTS TO GAUGE AND ENCOURAGE SELF-DETERMINATION.

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:

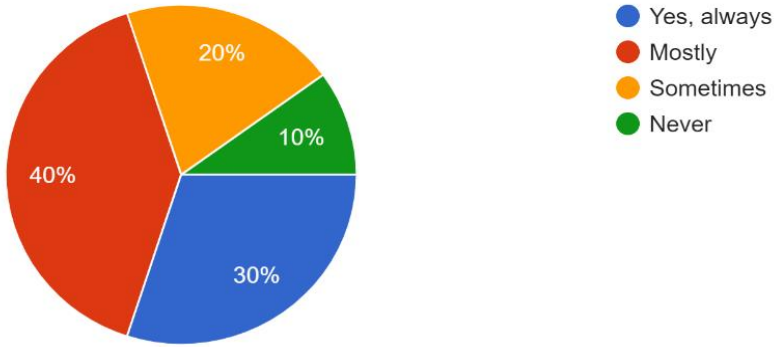
1. Student agency and self-determination
2. Parent and Carer Inclusion
3. Social and Cultural Inclusion

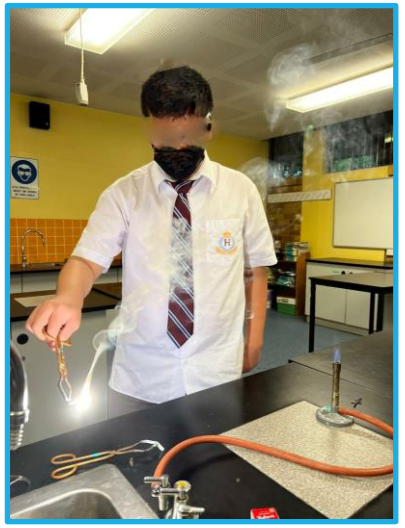
Students completed a questionnaire using Google Forms.

Results indicated the students were open to trying something new but more importantly they thought their knowledge would increase by accessing mainstream outcomes.

Do you enjoy your Science experiments in the lab?

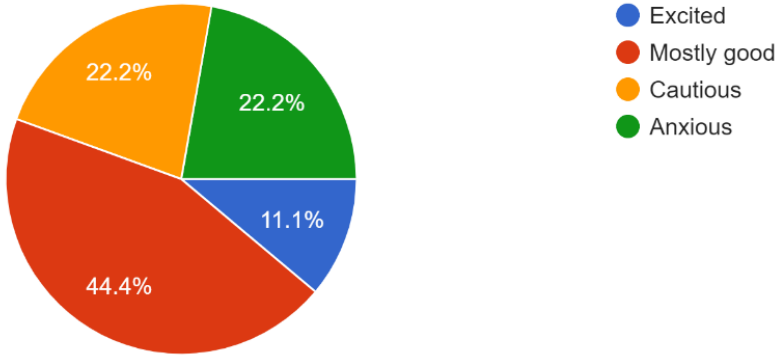
10 responses





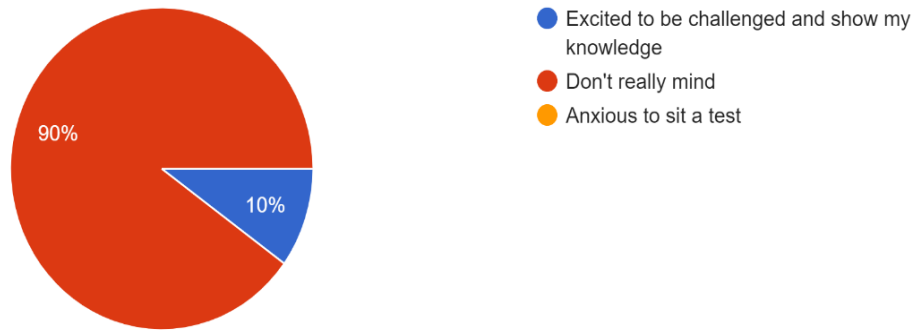
How do you feel about doing mainstream Science outcomes?

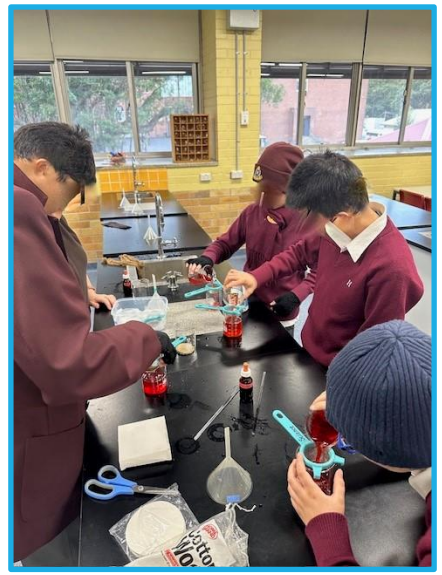
9 responses



How do you feel about doing an assessment to test your knowledge at the end of the term?

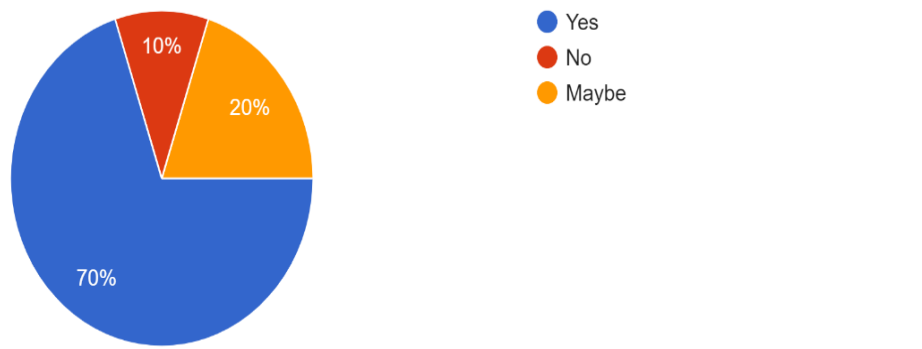
10 responses

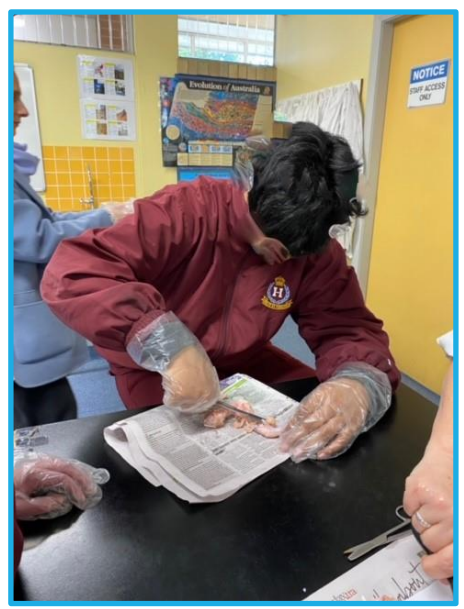




Do you think your Science knowledge will improve doing mainstream outcomes?

10 responses





1. SURVEYING STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:

1. Student agency and self-determination
2. Parent and Carer Inclusion
3. Social and Cultural Inclusion

To gauge and encourage self-determination, parents/carers were asked 3 simple questions:

1. Are you in favour of your child completing mainstream outcomes in Science this year?

2. Do you think your child would benefit from an end of term assessment to demonstrate their knowledge?

3. Are you willing for your child to study mainstream course outcomes in other subjects this year?

100% of responses said 'Yes' to each question

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
4. Curriculum Inclusion

2. USING STAGE 5 OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

Comparing Stage 4/5 Life Skills outcomes to mainstream

Term 1 - Energy

Life Skills Outcomes:

SCLS-11PW identifies various forms and sources of energy and their uses

SCLS-12PW investigates ways to use energy responsibly

Mainstream Outcomes:

SC4-11PW discusses how scientific understanding and technological developments have contributed to finding solutions to problems involving energy transfers and transformations

SC5-11PW explains how scientific understanding about energy conservation, transfers and transformations is applied in systems

Can the student access the syllabus outcomes for their age and Stage of schooling with or without adjustments?

YES

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
4. Curriculum Inclusion

COMPARING STAGE 4/5 LIFE SKILLS OUTCOMES TO MAINSTREAM

Term 2 - The Human Body and its Systems

Life Skills Outcome:

SCLS-17LW recognises features of living and non-living things

SCLS-18LW identifies structures of living things and their functions

Mainstream Outcomes:

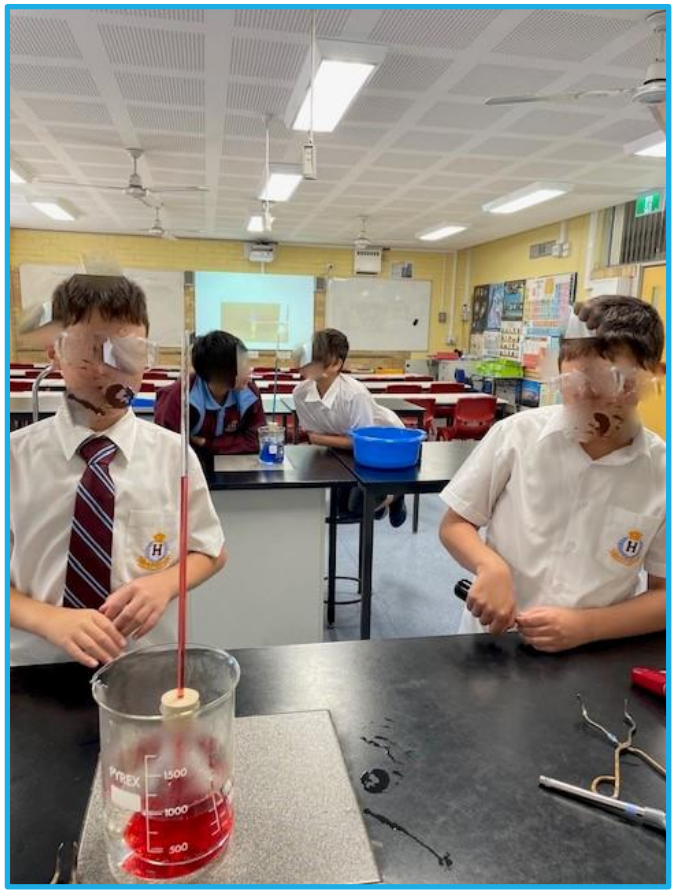
SC4-14LW relates the structure and function of living things to their classification, survival and reproduction

SC5-14LW analyses interactions between components and processes within biological systems

Can the student access the syllabus outcomes for their age and Stage of schooling with or without adjustments?

YES

LAB LESSONS



Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:

4. Curriculum Inclusion

5. Workforce capability for Inclusion

3. ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM ASSESSMENT TASKS TO MODIFY INTO ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

Professional Knowledge	**Standard 1** – Know students and how they learn **Standard 2** – Know the content and how to teach it

Collaboration with the science Faculty was crucial to planning, programming, assessing and reporting.

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

HOW CAN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE THEIR KNOWLEDGE?

Taken from Science program The Human Body and its Systems

Assessment:

Prior knowledge formative assessment e.g. Questioning, KWL

Formative assessment during practical investigations.

Examples of formative assessment opportunities:

- Following safety rules
- Contribution to class discussions
- Following practical investigation procedures
- Knowledge, understanding and application of all scientific aspects of scientific reporting/procedures and concepts e.g. making predictions, materials, method, results, conclusion
- Work samples
- Class quizzes e.g. Kahoot
- Word clouds

Summative assessment: Student designed experiment, Summative assessment task (range of short responses and multiple choice)

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT - ENERGY

Energy Assessment Term 1, 2023

Try your best :)

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. Change settings

What is your name?

Short answer text

1. List 4 forms of energy

Long answer text

2. What type of energy is stored in food and is released when it is broken down in your digestive system?

- heat
- sound
- chemical
- electrical

3. When a firecracker explodes, stored chemical energy turns into sound and light energy. What other type of energy is also released?

Short answer text

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT - ENERGY

18. What happens to air/liquid when it is heated?

- ○ It falls
- ○ It rises
- ○ It stays the same
- ○ It disappears

19. What is denser and falls to the ground?

- ○ Cold air
- ○ Hot air

21. Convection is...

- ○ heat transferred through infrared rays.
- ○ warmer to cooler areas in solid objects
- ○ heat transferred through currents in liquids and gases

22. Describe an experiment that demonstrates convection. (1 point is given for naming an experiment and 1 point is given by describing why the experiment demonstrates convection)

Long answer text

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT – HUMAN BODY

Name:

Body Systems Assessment Term 2, 2023

1. How many chambers are in the heart? (1 mark)

a. 1

b. 4

c. 3

d. 2

2. Arteries carry blood (1 mark)

a. Away from the heart to the rest of the body.

b. Back to the heart to be oxygenated.

3. What type of blood do the veins carry back to the heart? (1 mark)

a. Oxygenated

b. Deoxygenated

4. List three things carried by the blood (3 marks)

6. Calculate the pulse rate (in beats per minute) for the students listed in the table below (4 marks)

Student	Beats counted	Times (s)	Pulse rate (beats per minute)
Sam	10	10	
Jo	15	10	
Karl	22	15	
Jack	12	5	

b. Which student was most likely to be the one who had just finished playing soccer? (1 mark)

7. List the organs of the digestive system in order (6 marks)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

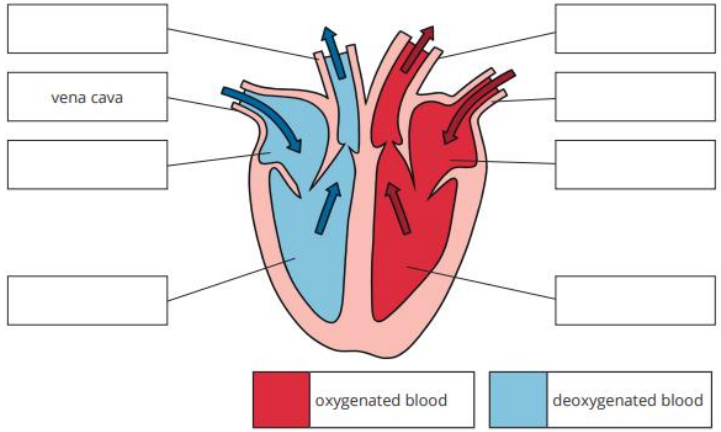
LESSON ACTIVITIES

The Heart

The heart is part of the circulatory system. Humans have a double circulatory system; the heart pumps the blood through two circuits. The right side of the heart pumps blood to the lungs and the left side of the heart pumps blood to the rest of the body.

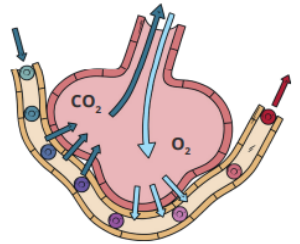
Blood enters the heart through the **vena cava** and passes into the **right atrium**, then into the **right ventricle**. The muscles in the right ventricle wall push the blood through the **pulmonary artery**, which carries the blood to the lungs. At the same time, blood from the lungs enters the heart through the **pulmonary vein**, passes through the **left atrium** and into the **left ventricle**. Muscles in the left ventricle wall push the blood through the **aorta**, which takes the blood to the rest of the body.

1. Label the parts of the heart in the diagram below.



2. Explain why the muscle wall on the left side of the heart is thicker than the wall on the right side of the heart.

Blood arriving at the right side of the heart is **deoxygenated**. The right side of the heart pumps blood to the lungs. Blood returning to the left side of the heart is **oxygenated**. The diagram below shows blood passing through a capillary close to an alveolus in the lungs.



4. Use the diagram to describe the process of gas exchange in the lungs. Try to include all the key words in the box.

alveoli	carbon dioxide	diffuses	exhaled
inhaled	oxygen	red blood cells	

The left side of the heart pumps oxygenated blood to the rest of the body.

5. Describe what happens to the substances in the blood as it passes close to the body tissues. Try to include all the key words in the box.

carbon dioxide	diffuses	glucose	energy
muscle	oxygen	respiration	

Learning activities taken from *Beyond Science* textbook

ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK, REPORTING

Science Assessments Sem 1	Energy	Body Systems
Student 1	31	33
Student 2	33	34
Student 3	20	24
Student 4	25	30
Student 5	33	29
Student 6	12	13
Student 7	26	21
Student 8	30	34
Student 9	26	27
	/35	/35

Science - Teacher Comment

This semester, Johnny successfully completed two programs, acquiring a deep understanding of various forms of energy and human body systems. He effectively utilised the knowledge and skills acquired in his lessons to autonomously complete both theoretical and practical tasks. Johnny showed an excellent understanding of thermal energy through the processes of conduction, convection and radiation. He learned about electricity and applied his knowledge to develop electrical circuits and investigate electrical insulators and conductors. Johnny was able to accurately identify a range of body organs and their functions in various body systems such as the circulatory and digestive systems. He was enthusiastic and confident about conducting practical experiments and worked cooperatively with his peers. Johnny is to be commended for his outstanding achievements in the end of term Science assessments. He achieved 33/35 in the Energy Assessment Task and 34/35 in the Body Systems Assessment Task. To progress further, he is encouraged to continue working on giving detailed answers to scientific questions in class discussions.

Science - Teacher Comment

Two programs were successfully completed by Alex this semester, where he explored different forms of energy and human body systems. He showed an understanding of thermal energy through the processes of conduction, convection and radiation. Alex learned about electricity, gaining insights about conductors and insulators. He was able to identify some organs and their functions in various body systems such as the circulatory and digestive systems. Alex attended mainstream classes during some of the lessons when Science was taking place in the Support Unit. He found the assessments in the Support Unit challenging, however he persisted and did his best to demonstrate his knowledge. Alex achieved 12/35 in the Energy Assessment Task and 13/35 in the Body Systems Assessment Task. His achievements in Science this semester deserve commendation, as he consistently displayed his knowledge of scientific concepts during lesson activities. To progress further, Alex is encouraged to continue focusing on deepening his understanding of scientific concepts taught in lessons.

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
6. System Inclusion

4. WEEKLY LESSONS IN LABORATORIES EMBEDDED INTO THE WHOLE SCHOOL TIMETABLE

Term 3 timetable meeting with timetable team, held the previous year, to embed laboratory sessions into the whole-school timetable. Some settings this does not happen but is crucial for students to have access to the same resources as their peers without disability.

It facilitated an inclusive whole-school culture.

No special bookings were required

Practical lessons were conducted on a weekly basis.

Lessons were held in labs even if practicals were not taking place.

5. SPECIALIST SCIENCE TEACHERS TIMETABLED TO TEAM-TEACH

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
4. Curriculum Inclusion
5. Workforce Capability for Inclusion
6. System Inclusion

Reciprocal teaching experience

Allowed for expert knowledge to be utilised from science teachers

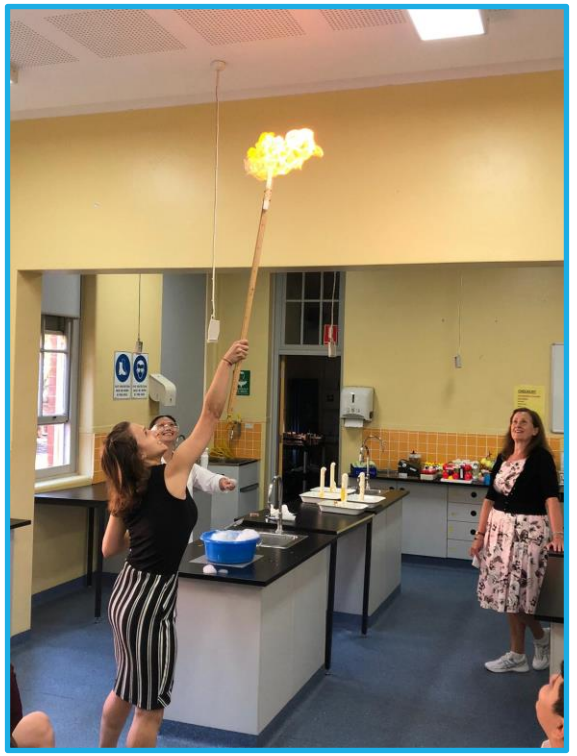
1 lesson per week for each class

Upskilled Science teachers with evidence-based teaching strategies used for SWD

Shared the success of our students across the staff of our school, which boosted the whole-school approach to an inclusive culture

Negotiation for this to happen was approved by the Principal in Term 3 the previous year during a timetable meeting. It is now embedded and planned for each year.

Science Faculty were very positive about adding a Support Unit load to their timetables



Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
4. Curriculum Inclusion
5. Workforce Capability for Inclusion

6. THE USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM THAT SUPPORT SWD.

SWD need effective teaching and learning strategies that are shrouded in evidence-based approaches.

Peer-mediated interventions – Year 12 students engaging in learning with our Stage 5 students

Reciprocal Teaching Strategies – Students take on different roles to gain meaning from text

Rotation stations – a mix of short sharp learning activities

Use of mini whiteboards or Google 'Jamboard'

Exit slips

Explicit instruction and modelling

7. COLLABORATION WITH FACULTIES AND SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:
4. Curriculum Inclusion
5. Workforce Capability for Inclusion
6. System Inclusion

Assessments (to modify)

Teaching resources

Lesson plans

Planning grade excursions (Centennial Park, Taronga Zoo)

Knowledge sharing

Setting up of experiments with the lab assistant

Builds rapport across faculties

Staff PL on teaching students with Autism

8. CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Link to Principles of Inclusive Practice:

1. Student Agency and Self-Determination
2. Parent and Carer Inclusion
3. Social and Cultural Inclusion
6. System Inclusion

Celebrate staff and student success in teaching and learning programs

Use school rewards system meaningfully

Assemblies (whole school, grade, faculty specific, classroom level)

Share with parents (digital sharing platforms, emails, phone calls, school gate chats)

School magazine publications and social media

Staff meetings (student and teacher commendations)

Student reports

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

WAS IT SUCCESSFUL?

Staff buy-in (Support Unit teachers and SLSOs, Science teachers, Executive staff) ✓

Whole-school buy in ✓

Student engagement ✓

Academic results through assessment (formative and summative) ✓

Anecdotal evidence of improved sense of belonging at school ✓

Staff capacity and enjoyment ✓

Strengthened an inclusive culture across the whole school community ✓

FUTURE DIRECTION

So far, we have challenged all mainstream teachers who teach our students for different KLA's, to provide meaningful assessment which is reported on.

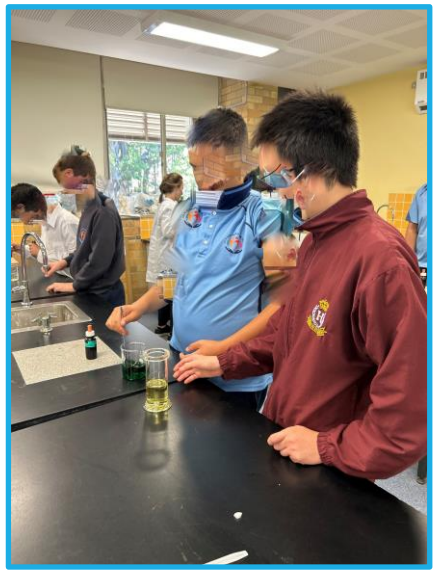
School level – apply to more KLA's and Stages

Network level – Peer Links Program at Chalmers Road School (SSP)

State level – NSW DoE state that 97% of SWD are taught in mainstream settings

So..

Collaboration between local high schools with similar settings, to help develop a consistent measure of learning outcomes for SWD is needed.



EXIT SLIP

Curiosity is the very basis of education and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only the cat died nobly.

Arnold Edinborough

slido

Do you think it is feasible to implement a similar collaborative model in your school setting?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

CONTACT DETAILS

Sam Widmer

sam.widmer@det.nsw.edu.au

Homebush Boys High School (02) 9764-3611