

Adjustments for Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia (which is more formally called a Specific Learning Disorder with impairment in Spelling and Written Expression) is a difficulty with spelling or written expression. Students with dysgraphia may have difficulties with spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, handwriting and the organisation of written expression.

This InfoSheet provides information about adjustment for classroom and homework, assessments, programming and intervention for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties. These adjustments can also be used to support students who have spelling or written expression difficulties but may not have a diagnosed specific learning disorder.

Adjustments help ensure that students with dysgraphia or spelling or written expression difficulties can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers.

Adjustments can be made to planning, teaching, assessments & reporting, the environment and resources.

Teachers make adjustments by modifying or changing the way they:

- plan and prepare programs, materials and activities
- provide instruction and present information to students
- have students practise and revise information and complete work in the classroom or at home
- assess and report on students
- set up the classroom and school environment

in order that students with dysgraphia or spelling or written expression difficulties can access the syllabus outcomes and content and demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Cth makes it unlawful for an education authority to discriminate against a student because they have a disability. Educators must offer students with disability the same educational opportunities as students without disability.

Educators must make changes or “reasonable adjustments” to how a student with disability accesses a course, the course delivery and the assessment procedures. Educators do not need to make a change if that change will cause “unjustifiable hardship”.

Dysgraphia is a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Similar protections are available under the Anti-Discrimination Act (1977) NSW.



Planning and Programming



The **Disability Standards for Education 2005** clarify the obligations of education providers to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

The Standards provide that when considering an adjustment for a student with disability, the education provider must:

- **consult with the student** (and their parents or guardians) about whether the adjustment is reasonable, whether the adjustment would allow the student to participate on the same basis as a student without disability and whether there is any other adjustment that would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial
- **decide on the adjustments** to be made to enable the student to participate on the same basis
- **make the adjustments in a reasonable time**
- consult the student and **review the adjustments** as necessary to allow for the changing needs of the student over time.



Programming Adjustments

Teachers plan and program for the most appropriate way for students to access the curriculum. This includes considering which syllabus outcomes best suit the needs of the student.

- Collaborative curriculum planning is the process outlined by NESA to determine the appropriate programming, classroom and assessment adjustments for a student with disability, taking into account the needs, strengths, goals, interests and prior learning of the student.



Nationally Consistent Collection of Data **NCCD**

Schools have an obligation to report the adjustments made for students who have a disability (or who the school imputes have a disability on reasonable grounds) to the NCCD (the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability).

Under the NCCD, schools are required to:



- have procedures for recording and storing evidence
- assess the **functional impact** of the student's disability or imputed disability (the impact on teaching and learning, communication, participation, personal care and movement)
- provide **reasonable adjustments** to assist the student with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students for at least 10 weeks in a 12 month period. Before making reasonable adjustments, **consult** with the student (and their parents or guardians) about the adjustments
- determine the **NCCD level of the adjustments** provided - support provided within Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice, Supplementary, Substantial and Extensive. [The NCCD has prepared this helpful Guide to choosing the Level of Adjustment](#)
- determine the NCCD category of the student's disability – physical, cognitive, sensory and social/emotional
- **record and retain evidence of adjustments**, consultation and collaboration with the student (and their family), monitoring and reviewing of adjustments and then review that evidence and approve the NCCD data before it is submitted to the NCCD.

Students who must be included in the NCCD are those students who have a disability or those students who the school imputes (judged to exist) have a disability on reasonable grounds and who receive reasonable adjustments because of the functional impact of that disability.

The Federal Government uses the information about the number of students receiving the different levels of adjustments reported to the NCCD to provide funding to support students with disability to schools and school systems.

Adjustments and Student Plans

It is best practice to document the adjustments for classroom and homework, assessments, programming and intervention that a student with learning difficulties or disabilities is receiving in a Student Plan.

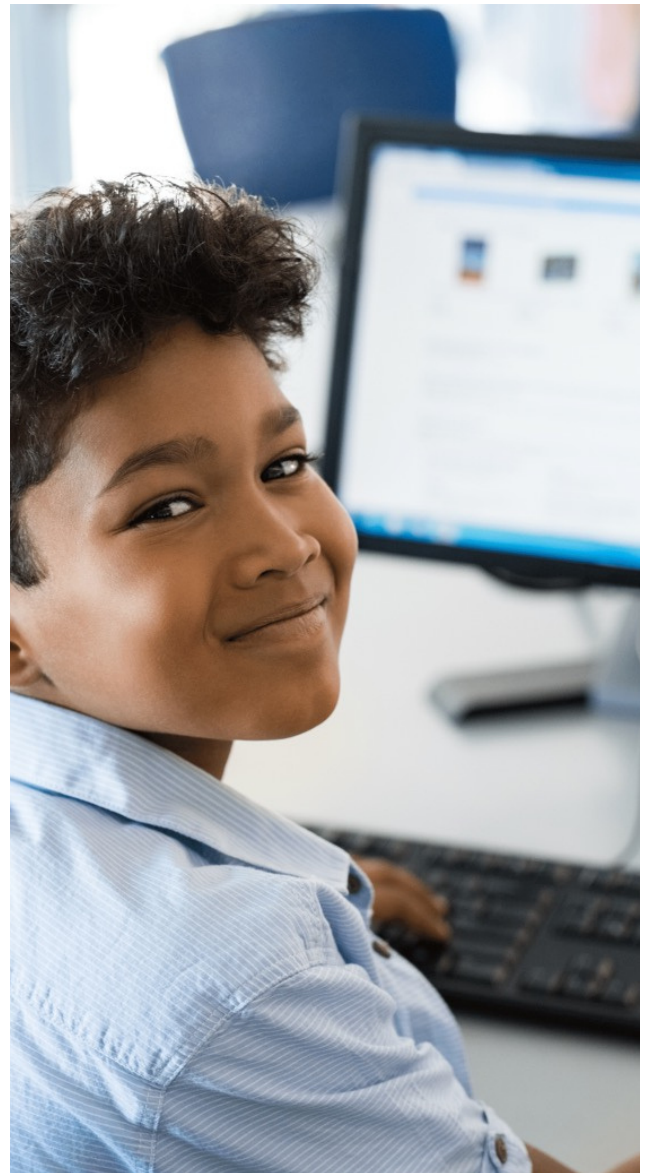


Student Plan

A Student Plan (commonly called an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personalised Learning and Support Plan (PLSP)) is used to document adjustments for classroom and homework, assessments, programming (or curriculum), and intervention provided to a student with a learning difficulty or disability to enable them to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

A Student Plan (an IEP / PLSP) can be used as evidence when recording adjustments for the NCCD.

A Student Plan (an IEP / PLSP) should be developed by the team supporting the student including their parent or guardian, classroom teacher/s, learning support staff, school leadership and the student.



Intervention for students who have **dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties**

The provision of intervention to support students who have dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties is essential to enable these students to continue to develop their spelling and written expression skills.

Students who have difficulties with spelling or written expression should have their skills assessed to allow for explicit, systematic and evidence-based intervention that targets their areas of difficulty.

Such interventions can include explicit, systematic intervention in phonics, spelling conventions, morphology, syntax and grammar and sentence and paragraph composition.

While students are developing their spelling and written expression skills, adjustments can be provided to allow them to access the learning in the classroom and demonstrate their knowledge in assessments.



Adjustments for students who have **dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties**

Each student with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties will have different needs for adjustments. Set out in this InfoSheet are adjustments that can be used to support students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties based on their different needs.

The following pages outline homework, classroom and assessment adjustment options and some best practice inclusive teaching practices to support ALL students with spelling and written expression.



Classroom and homework adjustments for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties

Student's area of difficulty	Classroom and Homework Adjustments
Difficulty with Spelling	
<p>These students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have reduced quality and quantity of writing • choose simplified vocabulary for writing tasks compared to their oral vocabulary • make frequent spelling errors and misspell high frequency words • make errors in notetaking, especially when copying from the board • avoid written activities or be slow to complete spelling and writing tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the expected amount of written work to be completed in class and at home. • Allow content knowledge to outweigh spelling in written expression tasks. • Avoid penalising written content due to poor spelling. • Allow classroom spelling practice of the spelling content being taught in intervention. • Provide word banks or a glossary of topic terms to assist with correct spelling and appropriate vocabulary choice in writing tasks. • Provide scaffolded and structured writing tasks. • Allow written tasks to be completed with alternate response formats e.g. point form, audio, graphic, verbal, or video responses. • For students in upper primary and high school, allow the use of tablets or computers to assist with planning and completing written expression tasks. • For students in upper primary and high school, provide access to assistive technology for written tasks to ensure difficulties with spelling do not impede written expression, e.g. speech to text, predictive spelling, spelling and grammar checkers, and online thesauruses. • Avoid asking students to spell words aloud or write on the board. Instead give them opportunities to volunteer. • Avoid asking students to use traditional dictionaries to check spelling; instead, offer digital alternatives.

Classroom and homework adjustments for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties

Student's area of difficulty	Classroom and Homework Adjustments
<p>Difficulty with Grammar, Syntax, Punctuation and the Organisation of Written Expression</p> <p>These students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make frequent grammatical or punctuation errors • have difficulty structuring sentences, paragraphs and whole texts • have difficulty producing writing tasks with clarity of ideas • only produce small amounts of written work • have stronger oral expression than written expression • have difficulty taking notes in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the expected amount of written work to be completed in class and at home. • Provide scaffolded and structured writing tasks. • Provide writing guides, templates, graphic organisers, scaffolds, writing exemplars, and editing checklists to support the writing process. • Allow written expression tasks to be completed over several sessions to allow sufficient time for planning, writing, and editing to take place. • Allow written tasks to be completed with alternate response formats e.g. point form, audio, graphic, verbal, or video responses. • For students in upper primary and high school, allow the use of tablets or computers to assist with planning and completing written expression tasks. Encourage students to use a word processor for editing of written work. • For students in upper primary and high school, provide access to assistive technology for written tasks, e.g. speech to text, word processors, spelling and grammar checkers, and predictive spelling.

Classroom and homework adjustments for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties

Difficulty with Handwriting

These students may:

- have illegible or messy handwriting
 - have slow and laborious handwriting
 - fatigue easily when handwriting
 - have frequent letter reversals that are not resolved following instruction
- Reduce the expected amount of written work to be completed in class and at home.
 - Allow written tasks to be completed with alternate response formats, e.g. audio, graphic, verbal, multiple-choice or video responses.
 - Allow student to use wide-lined or graph paper.
 - Provide additional wide-lined spaces on worksheets to allow students to complete answers.
 - Allow student to use a different handwriting script to the rest of the class, e.g. continuous cursive, if it is easier or more legible.
 - Allow student to use writing implements that are more comfortable, e.g. gel pens, softer pencils and pencil grips.
 - For students in upper primary and high school, allow the use of tablets or computers to assist with planning and completing written expression tasks. Allow students to use a word processor for the editing of written work.
 - For students in upper primary and high school, provide access to assistive technology for written tasks, e.g. speech to text, predictive spelling, word processors.
 - Avoid asking students to rewrite written tasks to make it neater.

Classroom and homework adjustments for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties

Student's area of difficulty	Classroom and Homework Adjustments
General adjustments for students with spelling or written expression difficulties	
These adjustments can assist all students with spelling or written expression difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid peer marking of students' written work and spelling assessments.• Avoid students having to copy notes from the board or requiring extensive notes to be taken in class. Allow students to photograph the board, provide copies of notes or presentations, or allow digital recording.• For students using a scribe for assessments allow ample opportunity to practice answering verbally under assessment conditions prior to the assessment.• Do not keep students in class during break times to complete unfinished class work, or require students to complete unrealistic amounts of work within limited time frames, or work beyond their ability at home. Instead, adjust the amount and / or complexity of work to be completed.• Provide parents/ carers with access to important information including homework and assessment task requirements, and topic summaries

Adjustments to In-School Assessment Tasks for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties

Schools are able to make adjustments to in-school assessments tasks for students with dysgraphia and spelling or written expression difficulties. Adjustments to assessment tasks enable students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

- Adjustments to the **assessment process** can include:
 - Using a scribe/writer
 - Giving extra time in an exam or to complete take-home tasks
 - Providing rest breaks
 - Scaffolding instructions
 - Providing additional information, e.g., providing a wordbank
 - Providing a quiet or separate area to undertake examinations to reduce distractions when using a scribe/writer
- Adjustments to the **assessment activities** can include:
 - Rephrasing questions or scaffolding assessment questions
 - Providing scaffolds or writing templates
 - Providing an alternative format for questions, e.g., short or point form questions instead of extended questions
 - Setting an oral task instead of a writing task, e.g. an oral comprehension or knowledge assessment
 - Setting an alternative task
- Adjustments to the **response format** can include:
 - Providing a computer or assistive technology to complete the task
 - Allowing written responses to be in point form or notes instead of extended response
 - Allowing videos, graphics, presentations or oral responses instead of written responses
 - No reduction in marks for messy or illegible handwriting, poor grammar, or spelling errors

If adjustments have been provided to allow a student to access an assessment, then this should not restrict the student's access to the full range of grades or marks for that assessment.

For InfoSheets about adjustments available to students completing the HSC, NAPLAN or the HSC Minimum Standard for Literacy and Numeracy Tests please refer to the SPELD NSW website.







The SPELD NSW website also has InfoSheets on adjustments for students who have difficulties with reading, and mathematics, and using assistive technology to support students with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Best Practice Inclusive Teaching Strategies to support ALL students with spelling and written expression

These best practice inclusive teaching strategies can be used in classrooms to support ALL students with spelling and written expression.

- Provide whole class explicit instruction of spelling, syntax and grammar, morphology, and punctuation.
- Provide whole class explicit instruction and modelling of written expression at the sentence, paragraph and whole text level, and for planning of written expression, including brainstorming, mind-mapping and using writing scaffolds and templates.
- Provide whole class explicit instruction on editing of written work for spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax and clarity of written expression.
- Provide whole class daily reviews (or regular reviews) and other opportunities for spaced practice of taught skills and concepts to achieve mastery learning.
- Provide explicit, whole class instruction to build background knowledge and pre-teach new and subject specific vocabulary prior to asking students to undertake writing tasks in the subject area.
- Explicitly pre-teach the spelling and pronunciation of key vocabulary in all classes (not only in English).
- Check for student understanding before assigning individual work or homework and ensure mastery before progression to more difficult tasks and skills.
- Adjust oral communication when giving instructions and teaching to support students with working memory difficulties.
- Allow the use of mind maps, scaffolded graphic organisers, tablets or computers to plan and complete written expression tasks for all students in upper primary and high school.
- Provide information to students using a mix of written, video, oral, and visual displays. Allow students to have later access to all of the materials to clarify and revise learning.
- In upper primary and high school, provide all students with copies of the presentation or notes from the board, or allow students to take photos of the board.
- In upper primary and high school, teach note taking and evidence-based study skills.
- Ensure documents provided to students are designed and edited to allow all students to access the key information with ease, for example, reduced density of text, including checklists and annotated worked examples, and highlight tasks to be completed with due dates.
- Ensure all students have opportunities to succeed in the classroom and recognise student effort over outcome.
- Promote a culture in the classroom of being a safe environment to talk about reading, spelling, and writing errors (without identifying individual students).

REFERENCES

WEBSITE	LINK
Association of Independent Schools - Planning Support and Resources (aisnsw.edu.au)	
AUSPELD Specific Learning Disorders Flow Chart (auspeld.org.au)	
Disability Standards for Education 2005 - Disability Standards for Education 2005 (legislation.gov.au)	
NCCD Website (nccd.edu.au)	
NCCD Guidelines (https://www.nccd.edu.au/tools/nccd-guidelines-0)	
NCCD Planning for Personalised Learning and Support: a National Resource (nccd.edu.au)	
NESA – Adjustments: Adjustments (https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/)	
NESA – Assessments: Assessment and reporting (https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/)	
NESA - Collaborative Curriculum Planning: Collaborative curriculum planning (https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/)	
NESA - Special Education: Special education (https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/)	
NSW Department of Education – Adjustments to teaching and learning: Adjustments to teaching and learning (nsw.gov.au)	
NSW Department of Education - Personalised Learning and Support: Personalised Learning and Support (nsw.gov.au)	