Gilson College

Diversity of Learners Policy

Primary Only	Secondary Only	**Combined Policy**

Policy Type: Academic

RATIONALE

Rationale

1. At Gilson College we acknowledge the diversity of educational needs present within the student body and adopt for its teaching and learning program the *student diversity* advice outlined in the Australian Curriculum.
2. The general principles as outlined below cover four areas of diversity:
   a) Students with disability,
   b) Gifted and talented students,
   c) Students for whom English is an additional language (EAL), and
   d) Sexually diverse students.
3. The student diversity advice is intended to help ensure that all students are able to access and participate in the Australian Curriculum and provide specific advice with regard to meeting the learning needs of students with disability, gifted and talented students, and students for whom English is an additional language or dialect, and sexually diverse students.

IMPLEMENTATION

Overview: An Australian Curriculum for All Students

4. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration provides the policy framework for the Australian Curriculum. It includes two goals:
   - Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes excellence and equity.
   - Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.
5. The propositions that shape the development of the Australian Curriculum establish expectations that the Australian Curriculum is appropriate for all students. These propositions include:
   a) that each student can learn and that the needs of every student are important
   b) that each student is entitled to knowledge, understanding and skills that provide a foundation for successful and lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community
   c) that high expectations should be set for each student as teachers account for the current level of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop
   d) that the needs and interests of students will vary, and that schools and teachers will plan from the curriculum in ways that respond to those needs and interests.

Meeting diverse learning needs

6. The relationship between the three dimensions (learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities) provides teachers with flexibility to cater for student diversity through personalised learning. Teachers can help meet individual learning needs by incorporating specific teaching of the general capabilities or cross-curriculum priorities through the learning area content (for example, teaching targeted literacy skills through a history lesson, providing opportunities to explore sustainability in a science lesson, or scaffolding language specific to mathematics).

Personalised learning

7. Starting with learning area content that aligns with students' chronological age enables teachers

to:
   a)   plan dignified teaching and learning programs that are respectful of their students' age,
   b)   develop rigorous teaching and learning programs that will challenge and engage all students,
   c)   ensure that all students progress through the Australian Curriculum.
8. Personalising the teaching and learning program enables teachers to:
   a)   select age-equivalent content that is meaningful and respects students' individual needs, strengths, language proficiencies and interests,
   b)   provide stimulating learning experiences that challenge, extend and develop all students,
   c)   use their knowledge of students' individual needs, strengths and interests to ensure access to the teaching and learning program.
9. Personalised learning may involve one or a combination of approaches in relation to curriculum, instruction and the environment.
10. Approaches may include:
   a)   drawing from learning area content at different levels along the Foundation to Year 10 sequence to personalise age-equivalent content,
   b)   drawing from and emphasising specific aspects of one or more of the general capabilities to adjust the learning focus in a particular learning area,
   c)   drawing from and emphasising specific aspects of one or more of the cross-curriculum priorities to adjust the learning focus of a particular learning area,
   d)   aligning individual learning goals with age-equivalent learning area content.
   e)   scaffolding student learning through guided practice and support
   f)   modelling and demonstrating skills, knowledge and cognitive strategies
   g)   organising and connecting knowledge, skills and values to promote generalisation
   h)   motivating students through engagement with personal interests
   i)   using cross-curricular and naturally occurring learning opportunities to enhance individual learning goals
   j)   providing alternative representations of teaching and learning materials
   k)   providing alternative opportunities for students to represent their learning
   l)   providing opportunities for generalisation and maintenance
   m)   providing opportunities for the student to work at a faster pace (acceleration, compacting), at greater breadth (enrichment) and in more depth (extension).

Students with a disability
11. The purpose of this policy is to support teachers in meeting their obligations under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) to ensure that all students with disability are able to participate in the Australian Curriculum on the same basis as their peers through rigorous, meaningful and dignified learning programs.
12. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* is intended to give students with disability the same rights as other students, including the right to education and training 'on the same basis' as students without disability.
13. The expectations apply to principals and teachers. Principals and teachers can meet their obligations by giving consideration to 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that students with disability are provided with opportunities to participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability.
14. Before any adjustments are made, consultation takes place between the school, student, and parents or carers.
15. 'On the same basis' means:
   a)   that a student with disability should have access to the same opportunities and choices in their education that are available to a student without disability,
   b)   that students with disability are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities,
   c)   that while all students will access age-equivalent content, the way in which they access it and the focus of their learning may vary according to their individual learning needs, strengths, goals and interests.
16. Schools need to comply with the Disability Standards for Education 2005, in regards to consultation, ensuring that there is a team of people who have significant knowledge and understanding of the student, including the student and their family members or carers.

17. Consultation can involve the principal, class teachers and support teachers, and can include the professional expertise of therapists and other community service providers. Consultation should take place regularly and changes made to adjustments if needed.
18. The purpose of the consultation is to identify the barriers to a student's learning and any adjustments that could be made.
19. Consultation should continue for the whole time that the student is involved with the school.
20. When describing or referring to adjustments, ACARA uses the definition in the Standards while acknowledging that states and territories may use differing terms.
    a) An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. Examples of adjustments are listed in the section Personalised learning.
    b) An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while taking into account the student's learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including the student with disability, the school, staff and other students.
    c) The process of consultation outlined above is an integral part of ensuring that schools are meeting their obligations in relation to reasonable adjustments.
21. It is important to consider that:
    a) many students with disability are able to achieve educational standards commensurate with their peers',
    b) not all students with a disability will require adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment,
    c) not all students requiring adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment will have a disability,
    d) students with disability requiring adjustments to one aspect of their learning may not require the same adjustment, if any, to another,
    e) students with the same disability may not require equivalent adjustments,
    f) not every student with a disability will require ongoing adjustments,
    g) students with disability may also be gifted and talented and/or have English as an additional language or dialect,
    h) to comply with the Standards, adjustment reviews occur regularly, and are changed or withdrawn where necessary.

Gifted and talented students
22. Gifted and talented students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and aligned with their individual learning needs, strengths, interests and goals.
23. Gifted and talented students vary in terms of the nature and level of their abilities; there is no single homogeneous group of gifted and talented students. Gifted and talented students:
    a) vary in abilities and aptitudes — they may demonstrate gifts and talents in a single area or across a variety of domains; they may also have a disability,
    b) vary in their level of giftedness — this means that two students who have gifts in the same field will not necessarily have the same abilities in that field,
    c) vary in achievement — while having gifts is often associated with high achievement, achievement can and does vary across high-potential students and over time, and some gifted students underachieve and experience difficulty translating their gifts into talents,
    d) are not always visible and easy to identify, and their visibility can be impacted by cultural and linguistic background, gender, language and learning difficulties, socio-economic circumstance, location, and lack of engagement in curriculum that is not matched to their abilities,
    e) exhibit an almost unlimited range of personal characteristics in temperament, personality, motivation and behaviour — no standard pattern of talent exists among gifted individuals,
    f) come from diverse backgrounds and are found in all cultures, socio-economic levels and geographic locations.
24. Although different definitions have been proposed over the years, there is no universally accepted definition of students who would be identified as having particular gifts or talents. However, a shared understanding of giftedness is important in order to address their needs. In Australia today, Gagné's model provides the most generally accepted definition of both giftedness and talent.

25. Gagné's *Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent* (2008) provides research-based definitions of giftedness and talent that are directly and logically connected to teaching and learning. According to Gagné, gifted students are those whose potential is distinctly above average in one or more of the following domains of human ability:
    - intellectual
    - creative
    - social
    - physical.
26. Talented students are those whose skills are distinctly above average in one or more areas of human performance. Talent emerges from giftedness through a complex developmental process and via a number of influences, including the teaching and learning opportunities.
27. Gagné's model recognises that giftedness is a broad concept that encompasses a range of abilities; it also recognises that giftedness is only potential and that it must go through a transformative process in order to become a talent.
28. It is important to consider that:
    a) gifted and talented students may also have a disability and/or English as an additional language or dialect — in such cases, adjustments should be developed that address all aspects of their learning rather than just those related to their gifts and talents,
    b) effective adjustments for gifted and talented students stem from effective and ongoing assessments of student need — because of the capacity of many gifted and talented students to learn at a faster rate than other students, ongoing formative assessment, particularly pre-assessment, is critical to ensure that the learning area content and adjustments align with student needs,
    c) gifted and talented students who require adjustments to one aspect of their learning may not require the same, or any, adjustment to another,
    d) the process of making adjustments always starts with learning area content that aligns with students' chronological age,
    e) because giftedness and talent are developmental, some adjustments may be necessary throughout a student's educational career, while other adjustments may only be needed for a short period of time,
    f) the student and parent must be consulted as part of the process to personalise learning.
29. Even though their cognitive development may not correlate with their chronological age, gifted and talented students are generally placed in Australian schools at the year level appropriate for their age. As a result, they are likely to require personalised learning through a range of adjustments to teaching and learning if the curriculum is to meet their needs.
30. In particular, gifted and talented students have specific learning needs that require adjustments to content (what students learn), process (how students learn), product (how students demonstrate their learning), and learning environment, according to personal characteristics such as readiness, interest and learning preference. By creating adjustments that take account of these differences, teachers are able to address the individual learning needs of each student and maximise their learning potential in the classroom.
31. Adjustments for gifted and talented students may include the following:
    a) content may need to be made more complex, abstract or varied or it may need to be organised differently,
    b) modifications to the process may be made to the level of thinking required, the pace of teaching and the type of approach used. In particular, gifted and talented students require process adjustments that involve higher-order thinking, problem solving, and a focus on critical and creative thinking and choice.
    c) the nature of products, the ways in which gifted and talented students are able to demonstrate what they have learnt, may also be adjusted to be more appropriate, for example, by ensuring that they are authentic and address real problems, and require transformation of learning rather than summarising content.
    d) in order to successfully implement adjustments to content, process and product, it is also important to make adjustments to the learning environment to ensure that it is complex and abstract, and also encourages independence and intrinsic learning.
32. Whatever adjustments are made, they need to reflect the ability of gifted and talented students to learn at faster rates, find, solve and act on problems more readily, and manipulate abstract ideas and make connections to an advanced degree.

33. Overall, adjustments should comprise elements of any or all of the following: faster pace (acceleration, compacting) greater breadth (enrichment) more depth (extension). Each of these three elements can be used in different proportions and in different combinations to frame a personalised response to the learning needs of all gifted and talented students.

EAL Students

34. In Australian schools, learning is accessed through English, and achievement is demonstrated through English. Each area of the curriculum has language structures and vocabulary particular to its learning domain, and these are best taught in the context in which they are used. All teachers are responsible for teaching the language and literacy demands of their learning areas.

35. Students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) require specific support to build the English language skills required for effective communication and access to the Australian Curriculum.

36. EAL students are those whose first language is a language other than English and who require additional support to assist them to develop proficiency in English. EAL students come from diverse multilingual backgrounds and may include:
    ● overseas- or Australian-born students whose first language is a language other than English
    ● Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is an Indigenous language, including traditional languages, creoles and related varieties, or Aboriginal English.

37. It is important to consider that students with EAL may have diverse educational backgrounds. They may have:
    ● schooling equivalent to their same-age peers in Australia,
    ● limited or no previous education,
    ● little or no literacy experience in their first language (or in any language),
    ● excellent literacy skills in their first language (or another language),
    ● learnt English as a foreign language and had some exposure to written English but need to develop oral English,
    ● already learnt one or more languages other than English,
    ● good academic language skills but struggle with the social registers of English.

38. EAL students are generally placed in Australian schools at the year level appropriate for their age. Their cognitive development and life experiences may not correlate with their English language proficiency. As part of the process to personalise learning for EAL students the student and parent must be consulted.

39. Effective teaching of EAL students is informed by an understanding of the characteristics of EAL learning, including students' learning needs and typical pathways of development. The particular challenge for EAL students is that they need to concurrently learn English, learn through (or in) English, and learn about English.

40. Teachers may use the EAL Learning Progression to identify where the student is in their English language development and what instruction is required to move them to the next stage of language development. A student may be at different stages in writing, reading, speaking and listening.

41. It is important to recognise that EAL students (and all students) bring a range of cultural and linguistic resources with them into Australian classrooms. These resources can be:
    ● used to build EAL students' English language learning and their curriculum content knowledge
    ● shared in the classroom for the benefit of all students; when the curriculum directs teachers to consider cultural and linguistic knowledge and attitudes, teachers should look first to the students in their classrooms to make use of the cultural and linguistic resources already present.

42. Effective teaching and learning practices are those which build on shared knowledge and understandings.
    ● While EAL students bring many valuable cultural and linguistic resources with them to the learning context, their experiences, understandings and expectations are often different from those that are assumed as 'common knowledge' in Australian classrooms.
    ● The curriculum often refers to the familiar and the everyday; however, the 'everyday' is determined by our social and cultural contexts. It is important to check whether EAL

students possess the 'everyday' and 'real-life' knowledge assumed by many curriculum tasks. To build shared knowledge around the concept, the class might view films, make visits to a bank or do role-plays.

- Teaching in context is vital to aiding communication and comprehension. EAL students require explicit teaching of all aspects of language in all curriculum areas. However, it is important not to study language in isolation.

43. EAL students are bilingual learners, and they are already language learners in at least one other language. They are an important resource in developing the language awareness of all students in the classroom.

44. EAL students require specific support to learn and build on the English language skills needed to access the general curriculum, in addition to learning area–specific language structures and vocabulary. This learning must occur across the four macro skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

45. Cultural factors to consider when planning for learning
- All students, including EAL/D students, have cultural resources that give them alternative perspectives on issues and phenomena, as well as experiences and knowledge. Drawing on these resources will add to the learning and experiences of all students in the classroom.
- Contextual and visual information that we often assume is supportive of learning is often culturally loaded. EAL/D students may not have experience with the cultural context or images of some books
- EAL/D students may have additional or alternative understandings that need to be considered when teaching aspects of the Australian Curriculum. These may include knowledge and understanding of ethical actions, historical viewpoints, family relationships, mathematical problem solving, currencies, and measuring time and temperatures.
- Body language, 'personal space', eye contact and gestures are linked to culture, and some EAL/D students will use and interpret body language and gestures differently. Teachers must be mindful that students schooled in one culture may take years to 'retrain' themselves to different conventions of gesture and body language. Explicit and sensitive assistance in this area is recommended.

Sexually diverse students

46. Supporting gender and sexually diverse students involves creating an inclusive, safe, and affirming school environment for <u>all</u> students. This is done utilising a variety of the following:
   a) Anti-Discrimination Policies: implementation of policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual diversity,
   b) Gender-Neutral Facilities: Provide gender-neutral restrooms to ensure all students feel comfortable and safe,
   c) Staff Training: Regularly train teachers, administrators, and staff sexual diversity issues, cultural competence, and how to support sexually diverse students,
   d) Inclusive Curriculum: Integrate sexually diverse topics into the curriculum to promote understanding and acceptance. This can include literature, history, and social studies lessons that reflect diverse perspectives,
   e) Counselling Services: Offer counselling and mental health support specifically tailored to the needs of sexually diverse students,
   f) Inclusive Language: Use inclusive language in all school communications and encourage students and staff to do the same,
   g) Confidential Reporting: Provide confidential ways for students to report bullying, harassment, or discrimination,
   h) Responsive Action: Ensure that reports are taken seriously and addressed promptly with appropriate actions,
   i) Parental Involvement: Engage with parents and guardians to educate them about sexually diverse issues and the importance of supporting their children,
   j) Positive School Climate: Foster a school climate that celebrates diversity and promotes respect for all students,
   k) Resilience Programs: Implement programs that build resilience and coping skills among all students, including sexually diverse students.

Staff Training

47. Training will be provided fir staff to ensure they are aware of the expectations regarding meeting the diverse needs of students.
48. This training will be provided to all new staff members with annual refreshing.

This policy was shared with staff Apr 2020

This policy was checked by ADCOM Feb 2020

This policy was ratified by the College Council Mar 2020

This policy was updated Feb 2025

This policy is due for review by 2028