5.3 Individualised Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning

In order to benefit from any bullying prevention program or intervention for students with disabilities, accommodations or modifications to school social inclusion and school anti-bullying programmes will be required. This is particularly important given the profile of social exclusion and heightened experience of bullying that are common for CYP with SEND.

In designing inclusive and appropriate bullying prevention programmes it may prove beneficial to analyse some of the key components of bullying prevention programs and the characteristics and special needs of students with disabilities to ensure that the programme is 'fit for purpose'. In many instances, there will be a need for accommodations or modifications, much like what is sometimes necessary for academic content and classroom instruction (Sipal, 2013).

The need to adapt an anti-bullying programme with reference to the individual profile of particular children or young people with disabilities, school setting, or pupil population characteristic will mean planning for a diversity of approaches across schools and education systems. **Teachers** will be important factors in understanding their students, classes and schools, with a partnership approach that emphasises empowerment being advisable. The emphasis within the teacher's resources will be on developing capacity among participating teachers to work collaboratively with pupils in the development of engaging and appropriate anti-bullying programmes within their shared school settings.

Approaches to adapting school programmes and policies such that they are accessible for all students, including CYP with SEND are vital. One such framework to guide differentiation of approach is Universal Design for Learning (UDL: CAST, 2018). UDL is a framework organised according to a set of principles, in written and spoken communication, which aim to encourage transparent, inclusive, and community-driven learning and to ensure access to all within learning cohort through flexible and individual design. These guidelines are designed to support improved accessibility within curriculum design and delivery in the sphere of education and to reflect the reality that diversity of preference, ability or support needs was common among learners in many settings. It emphasises the need for schools and teachers to adopt a flexible and appropriate stance in the design of accessible and appropriate

programmes to support participation across the full pupil groups.

In summary, UDL advocates for multiple means of engagement to stimulate motivation and learning, multiple means of representation by presenting information in different ways, and multiple means of action and expression by offering differentiated ways of expressing knowledge and understanding to ensure accessibility (represented in figure 2. below).

These principles can guide school leaders and teachers in adapting or differentiation of Anti-Bullying programmes or processes within their schools. In adopting a UDL informed approach, access and flexibility can be frontloaded into the design process based on informed understanding of pupil profiles or preferences. Such an approach is vital given the diversity of profiles or presentations among cohorts of pupils, inclusive of CYP with SEND. It emphasises the importance of fostering an inclusive and flexible medium for engaging these pupils within Anti-Bullying programmes, and in the social life occurring within schools.

The development of flexible and appropriate communication mechanisms across the education community, including parents, will be of utmost importance in supporting access for students with SEND. Matching the communication form used to the profile of the participating students, allied including their perspectives and interests as part of the process of differentiation of the anti-bullying programmes are effective in supporting participation.

Universal Design for Learning - Impact of Special Needs

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Figure 2. Principles of Universal design for learning

The below detailed considerations aimed at fostering inclusion of the needs of pupils with SEND within school-based bullying prevention programmes may be useful in guiding schools/teachers (Sipal, 2013).

Individualised Planning

It is essential for teachers and intervention leaders to link with "gate-keepers" before commencing any intervention to gain access to:

- Information of pupil/ school profiles/ needs
- Information of communication/ cognitive skills
- Information regarding interests/ preferences/ motivational factors

This information is essential in developing a detailed profile of the CYP with SEND in order to identify their particular areas of strength, interest and areas of support need. This is essential in informing the design of the School-based Bullying Prevention intervention, what roles to roles to given specific CYP within the process and the design of appropriate communication approaches.

When considering the design of the intervention, the materials to be used and the role to be allocated to the CYP, it is important to tailor the degree of participation in a manner appropriate for the pupils preferences or areas of strength. Access and flexibility are key considerations within the design and planning process for the anti-bullying intervention from the outset. Such considerations are, fundamentally, based on informed understanding of participant's profiles or preferences.

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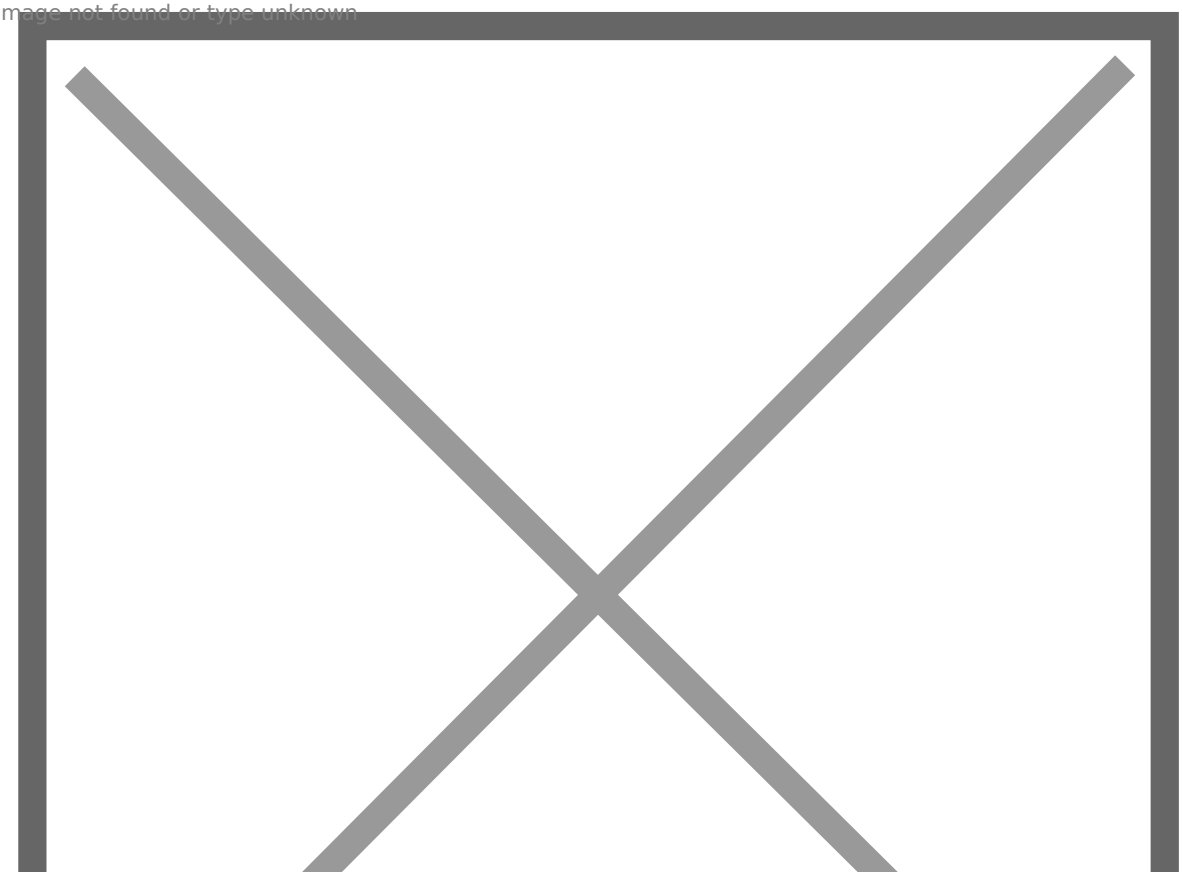


Figure 3. Levels of participation

Details of how the profile of strengths, interests or areas of support can inform the development of the bullying prevention programme include;

- Awareness of individual **cognitive profiles** (e.g., processing speed, working memory, verbal and non-verbal comprehension) will also inform the way in which information
  - is presented and received in terms of how much time is required for the individual to process questions or instructions,
  - how much time is required to formulate a response,
  - whether and what kind of prompts may be required (auditory and/or visual, human and/or material).
- Secondly, understanding the **sensory profile** of each participant will ensure that their comfort needs are met which might include arranging the physical space to allow unimpeded movement, reducing ambient auditory and visual stimuli that may be distracting or stressful, and paying attention to how the teacher/facilitator presents themselves/ interacts with the CYP with SEND. (for example moderating the tone, clarity, and volume of speaking).
- Thirdly, familiarity with the **communication profile and preferences** of each participant frames the method and materials used support participation and access for the CYP within the anti-bullying initiative. This, additionally, knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of accessible information and technologies will

need to be married to the preferences, strengths and needs of the individual pupils. These speak directly to the creation of literature for recruitment of ambassadors and participants within the anti-bullying programme. Additionally, how so support appropriate ongoing engagement during the initiative that necessarily needs to be transparent and comprehensible, to establish a motivation to participate, and to reassure participants that multiple means of communication are welcomed.

In line with a UDL framework, planning for inclusive school-based anti-bullying interventions clear and understandable materials are required which communicate the aims of initiative appropriately. Accessibility considerations within the design and selection of written communication relevant to groups of CYP with SEND is, obviously, a vitally important consideration. These factors are important for two reasons:

1. they may affect a participant's ability to comprehend information that is relevant to their decision making and consent, and
2. effective and appropriate written communication can enhance recruitment and engagement with the initiative

The use of a range of concrete, visual and accessible resources such as from visual timetables or image-based cards familiar to students to convey information or communicate responses can support participation from less verbally developed CYP with SEND. Use of sign language symbols or visual symbols to accompany text can support comprehension of information. In addition, the use of video or vlog based communication can be appealing and attractive to some cohorts of pupils with SEND. Such adaptations and focused flexibility is reflective of the UDL principle of providing multiple means of representation, providing information and content in a variety of ways in order to support understanding.

It is also advisable to consider how to co-develop an agreed coda of ground rules or principles which all participating pupils agreed to adhere to when they engage with each other during the initiative. This can be effective in fostering shared understanding and trust among the group and can support the CYP with SEND to disclose their areas of support needs or other important considerations.

Accessible methods to supporting participation in School-Based Bullying interventions

While planning carefully for flexible and inclusive practice is of vital importance, it is also important to consider UDL informed approaches to support participation *during* the intervention. How to engage, motivate and encourage participation from diverse groups of pupils which include CYP with SEND is important. There are a range of considerations which

can help guide teachers or facilitator in developing inclusive School-Based Anti-Bullying campaigns, which will be discussed below:

Key gatekeepers such as support staff, special news assistants or parents are an important source of information to supporting planning for inclusive interventions. Facilitators should liaise with these gatekeepers in order to ensure that venues, communication, information and transport are appropriate and accessible (National Disability Authority, 2002). These gatekeepers can also advocate or act as translators for the communication intentions or wishes of the pupils with SEND.

Visual representation throughout the data process it is essential to support engagement and empower pupils to express their opinions or contribute to the process. Written texts that use dense or complex language may be simplified and reinforced using social stories, photographs and pictures. Using symbols or cue cards such as ‘stop’, ‘break’ and ‘pass’ can help to alleviate frustration and guesswork by providing a visual means for participants to end the interview, take a break or skip a question (Goodall, 2020).

Adapting verbal language and communication style is essential where processing speed, working memory, verbal and non-verbal comprehension may be compromised, and will inform the way in which information is presented during the initiative or meetings. In their book *Is That Clear? Effective Communication in a Neurodiverse World*, Gaynor, Alevizos and Butler (2020) outline some considered approaches to using accessible language. These include techniques such as:

- Slowing down the language of requests and instructions: Multiple cognitive steps are involved in understanding and responding to questions including information retrieval, manipulation, and expression.
- Avoiding the insertion of unnecessary ‘filler’ words that have no meaning or purpose such as ‘I suppose’, ‘what I mean is’, ‘you might say’. This includes avoiding the temptation to fill silent pauses when the participant is considering their response.
- Speaking clearly and enunciating words to facilitate understanding; running words together as is habitually the case in normal conversation may impede understanding,

for example ‘plisoffiser’ for ‘police officer’.

- Breaking down lengthy instructions into smaller segments or steps adds clarity.
- Avoiding ambiguous words and sentences or any implied or hidden meaning.
- Use short, direct questions, and reframing these if necessary.
- Using the person's name at the beginning or end of the question or instruction.

Alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC):

Inclusive school based programmes should also be flexible in accommodating the needs of non-speaking or less verbally sophisticated CYP with SEND. Some considerations include providing interview questions in advance to allow time for reflection and composition, posing fewer questions, and acknowledging the need for extended wait time for response (Ashby and Causton?Theoharis, 2009). The inclusion of AAC communication systems that area already used by some CYP with SEND can support their participation within school-based initiatives. Facilitating communication preferences (Paterson and Carpenter, 2015) requires familiarity with the mechanics of AAC; hardware devices use software based on alphabet boards or picture / symbol grids that allow users to combine these to form phrases or sentences.

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