Recognise and remove barriers to learning

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Enable access and participation in learning'
from the Guide: Behaviour and learning

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Includes:

Social and emotional barriers

Remove threats to engagement

Potential barriers in task design

Self-assessment

Useful resources

Inclusive Education
From
Guide: Behaviour and learning

Strategy: Enable access and participation in learning

Suggestion: Recognise and remove barriers to learning

Date
14 May 2024
Link
inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/recognise-and-remove-barriers-to-learning

Social and emotional barriers

Consider potential social and emotional barriers to learning.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✔ Can the student's be themselves and identify with their culture in our learning space?

- ✔ Do I know how to pronounce every student name correctly?

- ✔ Am I aware of a student's preferences and sensitivities?

- ✔ Am I aware of what could diminish or threaten a student's self esteem?

- ✔ Do I know how to authentically connect learning to students?

- ✔ Do I acknowledge and build on students' expertise and skills beyond the classroom?

- ✔ Is my relationship with the students based on mutual trust and respect?

- ✔ How do the students know I value everyone one of them?

Remove threats to engagement

The design of learning can threaten student engagement.

Consider common threats to engagement in your context.

What could you do differently?

Threats to engagement	Increase engagement by offering
Teacher talks for too long and without visuals	Tight time frames for oral instructions supported by visuals
Noisy, unstructured environment	Designated areas for quiet work or collaboration
Forgotten instructions	Online or printed instructions and exemplars for students to return to as needed
Blank page for writing and can't get started	Starters and scaffolded supports such as writing or storyboarding templates
Surprised by a transition/change in routine	Visual timetable. Discuss upcoming changes. Oral prompts, "In 10 minutes we will be…"

Potential barriers in task design

Sometimes a specific component of a task can create a barrier for students if it is not designed with supports in place at the outset.

Consider the following list:

- ✔ physical access to materials, resources and workspaces
- ✔ locating personal resources
- ✔ taking a test or timed assessment
- ✔ letter formation
- ✔ spelling
- ✔ following instructions
- ✔ organising ideas
- ✔ working with others
- ✔ speaking in front of others
- ✔ staying focussed
- ✔ solving problems
- ✔ breaking down a task or goal
- ✔ setting a goal

Self-assessment

Are these UDL-aligned strategies emerging, partly in place, or established in your practice?

Illustrate your response with examples from your own teaching.

Engagement

- I regularly ask students for feedback about what can I do differently to remove barriers and support their learning.
- I plan learning experiences with students that are culturally relevant.
- I connect learning to students' interests.
- I minimise threats and distractions.

Representation

- I help students to activate their prior knowledge.
- I pre-teach key topic vocabulary.
- I present information and instructions in a variety of ways.
- I use mind or concept maps and graphic organisers to help students make connections between ideas.

Action and expression

- I provide a range of ways that students can express their understanding.
- I offer all students scaffolds such as writing frames and sentence starters.
- I scaffold tasks by modelling, providing guided practice, and providing opportunities for students to cooperate, collaborate, and support one another.

Useful resources

Potential barriers to learning and solutions

This table lists potential barriers to learning and suggests several solutions for each.

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UDL reflection questions 1 pager

The UDL guidelines reframed as questions.

Download PDF (210 KB)

Using the 3 principles

An example of using the 3 principles to guide planning

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