

Tier 1 Supports

Effective universal supports for inclusive classrooms



About this resource

Tier 1 Supports is an evidence-informed resource designed to strengthen teaching practices across all educational settings. Built around a **checklist of seven foundational strategies**, *Tier 1 Supports* helps create a supportive and effective learning environment for all students, including those with disability.

This interactive PDF is optimised for digital use, and includes:

Tier 1 Supports checklist – a list of seven key strategies designed to set the conditions for effective teaching and learning

Implementation resources – builds on the *Tier 1 Supports* checklist with links to videos, fact sheets and professional learning for each of the seven supports

Further links – links to support next steps in embedding neurodiversity-affirming practice.

[Watch this video to discover ways to maximise the use of the *Tier 1 Supports* resource.](#)

[Watch this video to see a Western Australian educator using *Tier 1 Supports* in their classroom.](#)

Tier 1 Supports and evidence-based frameworks

Tier 1 Supports can be used as part of the implementation of evidence-based frameworks, including Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

Response to intervention

Under a response to intervention model, tiered models of support provide evidence-based interventions that increase in intensity in response to levels of need. Tier 1 universal teaching and learning involves the whole class, with all students provided with opportunities to learn alongside their peers. Tier 2 small group work supports students with content and/or skill gaps, misconceptions or difficulties that prevent them from responding to high quality universal teaching. Tier 3 support is for students with complex needs who require intensive, individualised support.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

The concurrent implementation of a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model recognises that achievement goes beyond academic learning. The implementation of tiered strategies that foster wellbeing and engagement are key to maximising academic learning. Connected supports assist all students, including students with disability, to reach their potential.

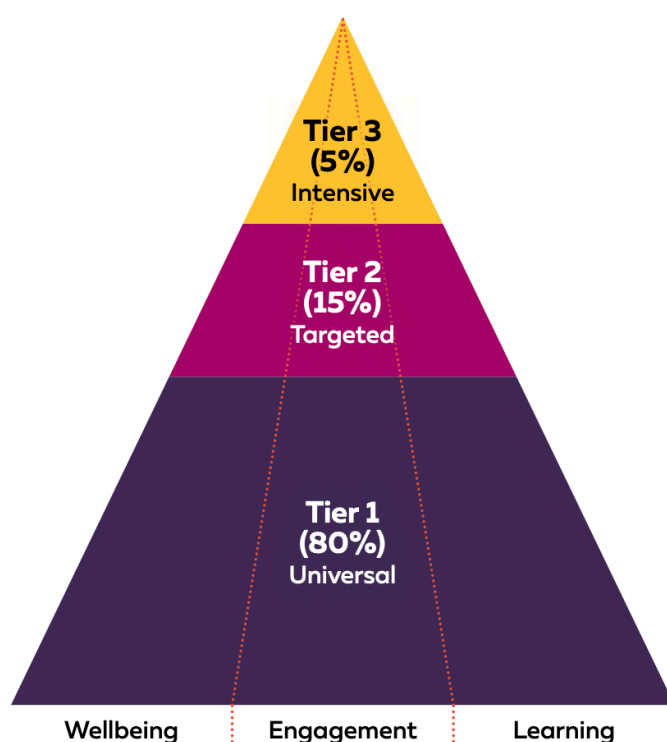


Fig. 1 - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) models provide connected supports to assist students to reach academic learning outcomes, including supports related to behavioural and socio-emotional considerations.

The needs of 80% of students are typically met by teaching and learning provided at Tier 1.

Tier 1 environmental adjustments: Meeting diverse learning needs

In Tier 1, student needs are typically met through the creation of safe, caring, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that promote students' social and emotional wellbeing, sense of belonging, engagement and learning. Educators in inclusive classrooms build strong relationships with students, foster cultural responsiveness and incorporate student voice into educational design.

To meet diverse learning needs, when necessary teachers facilitate adjustments to the environment. This approach enables all students the opportunity to learn. The *Tier 1 Supports* checklist contains evidence-informed environmental adjustments for Tier 1.

Department priorities

Tier 1 Supports has been developed with reference to a range of Department priorities.

Universal whole-class teaching – *Teaching for Impact*

To meet Tier 1 universal learning needs, teachers draw on the range of evidence-based instructional strategies outlined in *Teaching for Impact* to provide explicit teaching aligned to the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline that is accessible to all students. A variety of assessment strategies, including questioning to check for understanding, supports teachers to monitor student progress, provide timely feedback and differentiate practice. In Tier 1, teachers make reasonable adjustments to the pace, complexity and level of support provided to identified students.

Effective teachers believe they can unlock the learning potential of every student and place students at the centre of teaching and learning. A culture of high expectations is communicated for all students and through effective differentiation teachers support the achievement of ambitious and achievable goals.

Effective teachers focus on creating the preconditions for positive learning. They know that the learning environment provides the foundation to build opportunities for student success. To meet diverse learning needs, environments are flexible, adaptive and co-designed to maximise learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Implementing Tier 1 or universal supports is a way of adjusting the learning environment that will support students with additional needs while at the same time benefitting a range of other students, fostering a supportive and equitable learning experience for everyone.

Building strong relationships

Through developing a strong rapport with students, effective teachers build an understanding of student backgrounds, strengths, interests and abilities and use this knowledge to develop teaching programs that align to need. They foster genuine connections as they know that positive, caring, respectful and trusting relationships improve students' sense of belonging and connectedness, and strengthen student success.

Cultural responsiveness

Culturally responsive teaching creates the conditions for Aboriginal students to succeed as Aboriginal people. Effective teachers build on the cultural and linguistic backgrounds and strengths that Aboriginal students bring to the classroom and provide meaningful, relevant, place-based and culturally safe opportunities for students to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in the curriculum.

Student voice

Effective teachers recognise the importance of equity, and ensure all students feel safe to share their voice. They empower students to exchange thoughts, ideas, beliefs and opinions, build resilience and engage in meaningful decision-making. Teachers respect student voice by co-designing safe learning environments and shared expectations for areas including learning, engagement and positive behaviour. Acknowledging and respecting student voice contributes to a positive classroom environment and culture.

Using this resource: A suggested approach

Consider using the following steps to implement this resource:

1. Audit your environment

- Refer to the *Tier 1 Supports* checklist (Page 7)
- Evaluate each of the seven supports

2. Identify a support to focus on

- Based on your audit, select one support to focus on

3. Access supporting resources

- Refer to Resources for implementing *Tier 1 Supports* (Pages 8 to 10)
- Access the learning materials related to your selected support

4. Implement and integrate

- Embed the support into daily lessons and apply consistently
- Allow time for yourself and your students to become comfortable with it
- Assess its impact on student outcomes

5. Select a new focus

- Once embedded, choose another support from the checklist

6. Repeat and review

- Continue the cycle to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability.

Checklist indicators

Level	Indicators
Using currently	This support is part of everyday practice, applied consistently for the benefit of all students. Everyone understands the why and how of the support because it has been explicitly taught. Students have participated in decision making and feedback around implementation. Students feel safe to access the support and understand the expectations around it. You have allowed time for yourself and your students to become comfortable with it and you have assessed its impact.
Will use in the future	While you may have made some progress towards using this support, consistent whole-class implementation remains a future step.
Need to know more	This support requires greater understanding to begin implementation.

Tier 1 Supports checklist

Level indicators: see page 6	Using currently	Will use in the future	Need to know more
Visual schedules What: Use pictures or written schedules to outline the day's activities. Why: Provides predictability and reduces anxiety by helping students understand what to expect.	☐	☐	☐
Breaks and movement opportunities What: Schedule regular breaks and incorporate physical activities into the day; allow unscheduled breaks when needed. Why: Helps manage energy levels and reduces stress, promoting focus.	☐	☐	☐
Structured and predictable transitions What: Use visual and/or auditory cues to signal transitions between activities. Why: Helps students prepare for and manage changes, reducing anxiety.	☐	☐	☐
Sensory-friendly environment What: Minimise loud noises, bright lights, and strong smells; provide sensory tools (e.g. noise-canceling headphones). Why: Reduces sensory overload, allowing students to concentrate better on learning tasks.	☐	☐	☐
Flexible seating options What: A variety of seating or standing options within the educational environment. Why: Promotes student comfort, choice and opportunities for self-regulation, increasing chance of focus and engagement.	☐	☐	☐
Clear and consistent routines What: Establish and maintain consistent daily routines. Why: Helps students understand expectations, reducing stress and enhancing focus.	☐	☐	☐
Cultivate and teach acceptance of diversity What: Ensure diversity in classroom representation and incorporate books, videos and imagery that feature diverse representations of human experience. Why: Helps all students understand the variation in human experience and encourages acceptance of difference.	☐	☐	☐

Resources for implementing *Tier 1 Supports*

This page expands on the *Tier 1 Supports* checklist (Page 7) with links to videos, fact sheets and professional learning for each of the seven supports.

Visual schedules

Fact sheet

[Autism and visuals](#)

[Key strategies for supporting students](#)

Video example

[Providing support through visuals](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Autism module](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

[Proactive Planning - Early Years](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

Breaks and movement opportunities

Fact sheet

[Tips and strategies for teachers \(Autism Association of WA\)](#)

Video example

[Breaks and movement opportunities](#)

[Effective breaks](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Autism module](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

[Restorative approaches self paced module](#) (Search Ikon catalogue at link)

Structured and predictable transitions

Fact sheet

[Prepare students for transitions](#)

Video example

[Prepare students for transitions](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Tier 1 Supports PL](#) (Delivered live – see the SSEND PL events schedule on the One Classroom website)

Sensory friendly environment

Fact sheet

[Meet students' sensory needs](#)

Video example

[Sensory friendly environments](#)

[Sensory needs](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Restorative approaches self paced module](#) (Search Ikon catalogue at link)

[Autism module](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SSEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

Flexible seating options

Video example

[Flexible seating options](#)

[Flexible working environments](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Autism Session 2: Learning Environment](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SSEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

Clear and consistent routines

Fact sheet

[Consistently use routines and schedules](#)

Video example

[Daily Review](#)

[Consistent Routine](#)

[Consistently use schedules](#)

[Giving clear directions](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Tier 1 Supports PL](#) (Delivered live – see the SSEND PL events schedule on the One Classroom website)

Cultivate and teach acceptance of diversity

Fact sheet

[Promoting cultural diversity](#)

Video example

[Our Friend Alex](#)

Further reading, resources and professional learning

[Autism module](#) (Access in a range of modes via the SSEND Professional Learning Dashboard on the One Classroom website)

[AIATSIS Guide to evaluating and selecting education resources](#) (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies)

[Look! It's me! Children's picture books on diversity and inclusion, reviewed by young people with disability](#) (Children and Young People with Disability Australia CYDA)

The [Rocky & Me](#) resource supports Year 5 and 6 teachers and students to explore themes from the short film, with learning tasks related to disability, inclusivity, friendships, puberty, wellbeing and media representation.

[Spread the word](#) is an activity for secondary students where they are asked to consider the values of kindness, respect and support for diversity and how these contribute to a safe school.

Additional resources

Here are some additional resources to support your next steps in embedding neurodiversity-affirming practice. Click the links below to access them.

Teaching for Impact

[Teaching for Impact](#) is a major component of the Quality Teaching Strategy. It is the Department's position and understanding of effective teaching practice.

Autism CRC

[Autism CRC](#) is the independent national source of evidence for best practice in relation to autism across the lifespan and the spectrum.

NCCD website

[The website of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data](#) (NCCD) on students with disability contains a range of resources, including case studies, to grow your understanding of the NCCD.

Statewide Service Resource and Information Centre

Search the [Access physical and electronic education resources service on Ikon](#) to access the Department's library catalogue.

One Classroom

[One Classroom](#) is the website of The School of Special Educational Needs: Disability (SSEND). SSEND builds the capacity of Western Australian public schools to ensure students with disability (diagnosed or imputed) are able to access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers.

Positive Partnerships

[Positive Partnerships](#) is an organisation working together with parents, carers and educators of school-aged children on the autism spectrum to provide current, relevant and evidence informed information through workshops and online resources.

Student Wellbeing Hub

[The Student Wellbeing Hub](#) has been developed by Education Services Australia for the Australian Government Department of Education.

Additional resources (cont.)

Multi-Tiered System of Support Connect Community

[MTSS Connect Community](#) for the MTSS approach, linked to the Public School Review domains.

Complex Behaviour Support (CBS) Coordinator Connect Community

[\(CBS\) Coordinator Connect Community](#) for CBS Coordinators, who play an important role in connecting key Department strategies, such as the Quality Teaching Strategy, *Student Behaviour in Public Schools policy and procedures*, and the Student Care and Wellbeing Taskforce.

This material has been prepared by the School of Special Educational Needs Disability (SEND).

SEND has collaborated with the Centre for Accessibility Australia to ensure that this document is fully accessible to all individuals. Comprehensive measures have been taken to meet accessibility standards, including compliance with WCAG 2.2 guidelines as well as the PDF/UA standard.

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