

Adaptive Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom

The term "adaptive teaching" or "adaptive instruction" has its origins in the broader concept of "adaptive learning" and "adaptive educational technologies." These concepts emerged as a result of advances in technology and cognitive science. While the term "adaptive teaching" may not have a single point of origin or a specific individual associated with its creation, it has evolved as a natural outgrowth of advances in technology and educational theory. It encompasses the idea of tailoring instruction to the unique needs of individual learners, a goal that has been at the core of educational innovation for decades.

As the Head of Product Inclusion at Google, Annie Jean-Baptiste, states "if you do not intentionally, deliberately and proactively include, you will unintentionally exclude". Adaptive teaching is the process of adapting teaching to make it appropriate for ALL students in the classroom so they can all access and learn the most challenging content. Adaptive teaching focuses on all pupils not just the middle majority, it designs for those on the margins, recognising those barriers and delivering flexibly to support all. Adaptive teaching encompasses not just the instruction but the environment, resources and most of all the flexibility to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a way that is flexible to their needs. This may include assistive technology, flexible ways of engaging students with the materials, flexibility in how students show their understanding and flexible ways of assessing their learning.

Adaptive teaching supports inclusion within the classroom, it fosters belonging by ensuring that diversity and equity are taken into account when planning and designing the learning. This is important for all learners. Adaptive teaching considers not just the what of the learning but the why and the how, ensuring the learning is meaningful, relevant and accessible for all. Inclusion is not just about pupils with SEND, it is for all pupils. All pupils will require additional support, be that temporary or permanent, at some time in their education career. By providing these supports as part of the universal offer for pupils, they can become more autonomous in their choices of what works for them and develop understanding of their own needs and how they can best be supported. It supports self-advocacy and the preparation for adulthood from the earliest years.

As we see the numbers of pupils with identified SEND increasing and the diagnoses becoming increasingly multi-faceted and complex, the idea of adaptive teaching is even more important. By incorporating features that will support all pupils we can provide for the educational needs and foster belonging while enthusing and creating knowledgeable and self-aware young people ready to take their place in their communities.

Where to start with Adaptive Teaching?

As these five principles of inclusive teaching from [McMasters University](#) show:



This is all within the pedagogy of every teacher. It is recognising that every time a child struggles with something in class they are showing you a barrier to learning and you should take steps to remove that barrier. Building in flexibility will allow more barriers to be removed and to ensure that barriers aren't added unknowingly. Setting the highest expectations for all and providing the means to allow all to achieve success will support achievement and engagement. Adaptive teaching is about skilful teacher questioning, purposeful in-class interventions and quality discussions.

To finish with a quote 'Diversity is a fact. Inclusion is an act'. You will only increase the inclusion of pupils in your class by deliberately setting out to develop inclusion. You are the catalyst for the change that you want to see, the change your pupils need to belong and achieve. Give yourself the time to reach the level of familiarity required with a class to achieve effective adaptive teaching.

Further Reading:

[CAST: About Universal Design for Learning](#)

[EEF blog: Moving from 'differentiation' to 'adaptive teaching' | EEF \(\[educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\]\(http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)\)](#)

[Inclusive practices / Kia ora - NZ Curriculum Online \(\[tki.org.nz\]\(http://tki.org.nz\)\)](#)