NCCA

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta

Social, Political and Environmental Education: CSPE

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with

MILD

General Learning Disabilities

NCCA

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Contents

Introduction

These guidelines are designed to support the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) teacher within the context of a whole school plan for students with special educational needs

Social, Political and Environmental Education

These guidelines are intended to support teachers of students with mild general learning disabilities to assess Junior Certificate CSPE as part of the social, political and environmental area of experience. In this area students

learn about the physical, social and cultural forces, which have shaped the world in which they live and discover how they will themselves, contribute to shaping the lives of future generations.

This area of experience includes Geography, History and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE).

This section is designed to support the CSPE teacher within the context of a whole school plan for students with special educational needs.

Similar materials have been prepared for teachers working with students accessing the *Primary School Curriculum*. Continuity and progression are important features of the educational experience of all students, and for students with special educational needs they are particularly important. Therefore, all the exemplars here include a reference to opportunities for prior learning in the *Primary School Curriculum*.

In Approaches and Methodologies individual differences are emphasised and potential areas of difficulty and implications for learning are outlined and linked with suggestions for teaching strategies for classroom use.

The exemplars in these guidelines draw on the Junior Certificate syllabus for CSPE. The exemplars have been prepared to show how students with mild general learning disabilities can access the curriculum through differentiated approaches and methodologies. It is hoped that these exemplars will facilitate teachers in providing further access to this curricular area. They are not intended to cover all of the course or any part of the course in its entirety. A strong emphasis is placed on using active approaches to learning and real-life experiences that relate to the students' environment and prior learning. A range of assessment strategies is identified in order to ensure that students can receive meaningful feedback, and thus enhance their learning.

3

Approaches and methodologies

Students with mild general learning disabilities will benefit particularly if the teacher is aware of their individual talents, strengths and needs before embarking on a new activity.

Individual differences in talents, strengths and needs

If learning activities are to be made meaningful, relevant, and achievable for all students then the teacher will have to find ways to respond to students' diversity by using differentiating approaches and methodologies. This can be achieved by

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students

- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning

- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups

- spending more time on tasks

- organising the learning task into small stages

- ensuring that language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding and does not hinder his/her understanding of the activity

- using task analysis to outline the steps to be learned/completed in any given task

- posing key questions to guide students through the stages/processes and to assist in self-direction and correction

- using graphic symbols as reminders to assist in understanding the sequence/steps in any given task/problem

- modelling task analysis by talking through the steps of a task as it is being done

- having short and varied tasks

- creating a learning environment by the use of concrete and (where possible) everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

4

Teaching strategies

When planning for teaching and learning in the area of CSPE a variety of teaching strategies need to be considered. These will respond to the particular challenges faced by students with mild general learning disabilities.

When the teacher is designing, planning, and structuring a programme, potential areas of difficulty may emerge for these students as they engage with classroom experiences and methodologies. It is important to remember that not all students with mild general learning difficulties face all of these challenges. Neither is it an exhaustive list. The following suggests some strategies to meet some areas of potential difficulty.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Poor self-esteem and a fear of failure	A sense of helplessness where the student constantly seeks help or refuses to proceed with even the simplest of tasks. (Students may get trapped into thinking *'I can't do this subject'*.)

+ Possible strategies
■ It is important for such students to experience success as often as possible.
■ Realistic and achievable targets should be set.
■ Tasks should be relevant to the students' day-to-day experience and have a clear purpose.
■ The classroom culture should assume that mistakes are an integral part of the learning process.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Application of previously learned knowledge to other areas of the curriculum	Students find it difficult to connect how the skill acquired in one subject, is similar to a skill in another setting.

+ Possible strategies
■ Evaluate prior learning by using a pre-test, in order to find out what students know.
■ Review and recap learning regularly.
■ Discuss what has already been done in class.
■ Help students make connections about skills and concepts between one subject area and another.
■ Reinforce cross-curricular work with other teachers, (research skills in CSPE with English).

6

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Language, problems with listening	Students have difficulty with the language and concepts of the subject, and find it difficult to follow complex sentences and instructions.

+ Possible strategies

- Teach the language of the subject actively by displaying key terms/concepts on wall charts in the classroom, and using flash cards showing terms and definitions.
- Use a tape recorder to improve listening and language skills.
- Target certain CSPE words, terms, and concepts for a day, week, month.
- Display large scale diagrams/photos e.g. political figures, maps of EU, Ireland's constituencies, newspaper features etc. encountered during learning and refer to these regularly.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Signs, acronyms and symbols	Students find it difficult to understand and to remember, signs and acronyms symbols in mapping.

+ Possible strategies

- Connect signs, acronyms, and symbols with everyday life (thermometer/temperature, clouds/rain).
- Use appropriate colour to help students remember meanings
- Prompt students, and revisit the signs, symbols and acronyms frequently.
- Encourage students to keep a symbol and keyword dictionary.
- Use wall charts.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Visual sequencing	Students have difficulties copying work from the board, where to start the work in their copies, sequencing of material is problematic.

+ Possible strategies

- When writing on the board use a print style rather than cursive script.
- Use cues in worksheets, for example *'Start here'*.
- Remind students regularly about the conventions of print (left-to-right, top-to-bottom, front-to-back).
- Remind students about key stages in the work. (*'This is the front'*, *'This is the end'*, *'Begin here'*).
- Indicate to the students the precise place in their copies where they should commence the work.
- Avoid note-taking from the board as much as possible.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Short attention span, lack of concentration and application	Students rush the task, are easily distracted, or give up easily.

+ Possible strategies

- Design short easily accomplished tasks and offer a reward to the students for staying on task.
- Encourage students to work in pairs and small groups.
- Use cloze exercises, worksheets, experiments and simple research projects to help improve students' application.
- Encourage students to maintain a portfolio of work, and to record skills and achievements on the completion of tasks.
- Observe and note students' strengths and preferred learning styles in order to facilitate the planning of future work.
- Vary teaching methodologies to keep students motivated and on task.

▲ Potential area of difficulty	= Implications for learning
Understanding broad concepts, themes, and issues	Students may find concepts difficult to understand, for example in the areas of rights, responsibilities, citizenship, and environmental issues.

+ Possible strategies

- Use group discussion to help students to listen to and work with others. This is a useful approach when introducing a theme or concept.
- Use a combination of stories, case studies, cartoons/photographs, and pictorial images of events and activities.
- Involve students in participatory and experiential learning through working in pairs or groups.
- Involve students in small scale action research to help them become aware of broader issues such as voting or environmental awareness.
- Create a supportive environment for students through the use of co-operative learning techniques.
- Use cross-curricular learning approaches, for example linking the gathering of data in voting activity with mathematics, art, and English.

Exemplars

Teachers using the exemplars are encouraged to choose the learning outcomes, supporting activities, and assessment strategies that best suit the needs of their students.

Introduction to exemplars

The exemplars in these guidelines are presented as examples to show how certain strategies mentioned in the previous section can be used in teaching a selection of topics from the CSPE syllabus. They are not intended to cover all of the course or any part of the course in its entirety. Teachers using the exemplars are encouraged to choose the learning outcomes, supporting activities, and assessment strategies that best suit the needs of their students. Some students may achieve the first one or two learning outcomes while others may achieve the full range of outcomes. In the majority of the exemplar tables the first suggested outcome is linked to the first supporting activity and to the first assessment strategy, and so on.

Structure of the exemplars

Each of the exemplars is preceded by a summary, which outlines the relevant sections of the *Primary School Curriculum*, the *Junior Certificate* (ordinary level) and the *Junior Certificate School Programme* (JCSP). It also highlights some of the potential areas of difficulties that students with mild general learning disabilities experience at Junior Cycle and some strategies are suggested. In addition, a time scale and a list of resources are provided. The suggested outcomes, supporting activities, and assessment strategies for a lesson/series of lessons are also included.

Exemplars

No.	Syllabus Topic	Exemplar Title	Page
1.	CSPE—Undertaking the action project	Litter is out!	11
2.	CSPE—Undertaking the action project	Vote right now!	16

Exemplar 1: **SPEE: CSPE**

Syllabus topic: Undertaking the action project | Litter is out!

Primary (5th and 6th classes)	Junior Certificate	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
Geography Strand: Environmental awareness and care **Science** Strand: Environmental awareness and care	The Individual and Citizenship, concepts—community, stewardship, rights and responsibilities	The Individual, Community and Society

Time scale: The full range of learning and assessment activities presented in this exemplar may take up to 10 class periods.

Potential areas of difficulty

→ Understanding broad concepts, themes and issues in CSPE—democracy, rights and responsibilities

→ Vocabulary/language of CSPE—environment, citizenship, democracy

→ Transfer to real-life situations—recycling, pollution

Strategies used in this exemplar

■ Structured discussions introduce the concepts of responsibilities and rights for students

■ Research and discovery activities in the school context will localise the more national perspectives for students

■ Students will be engaged in the real-life contexts such as care for the environment

■ Inviting visitors into the classroom offers students another perspective on responsibility and leadership

■ Simulation activities prepare students for future decisions about recycling, about democracy, about the role of the individual

■ Using ICT to display charts and diagrams

Resources

• ENFO leaflets about recycling, protection of the environment

• CSPE publications

• Information on the Tidy Towns competition

• Environmental Information Service (ENFO) has a number of resources and materials to students. (See www.enfo.ie)

• Appropriate ICT computing packages

Exemplar 1: **SPEE: CSPE**

Suggested outcomes	Supporting activities	Assessment strategies
As a result of engaging in these activities students should be enabled to • design a simple questionnaire • undertake a litter survey • understand the impact of litter on the school environment • be aware of individual/ community rights and responsibilities • engage in group work • present results to staff/school management • use a cross-curricular approach by linking CSPE and art, craft and design, English, ICT.	• Group discussion about litter around the school and the community. • Research/discovery activities and action activities that are suggested, see Activity 1 Litter Survey. • Introduction of the action project dimension of CSPE is given to students (refer to the CSPE Teacher Guidelines). • Invitation to a guest speaker to visit and to meet with students. This person might be a litter warden, local county counsellor, employee from local recycling plant, ENFO representative. • Organising a visit to a local recycling plant or land-fill site. • Viewing a video of the most recent Tidy Towns competition.	Teacher assessment • The student will complete the chart in Activity 1 and record findings visually. Teacher and student • Display the results of the questionnaire, using Excel ICT package and be able to identify different types of charts (bar, pie, scatter). Peer assessment • Design a student-friendly anti-litter poster, in art class with a classmate. • Produce a wall chart project on litter using materials suggested. Teachers and students will assess and observe if students have developed the ability to • work in small groups • improve negotiation skills • complete a written report of results for staff.

Exemplar 1: **SPEE: CSPE**

Activity 1

Litter survey

Group discussion and discussion about litter is initiated in the class. This engages students to relate their experience about litter at school, home and in the community. The purpose is to direct students to the immediate school environment and to undertake a simple survey regarding litter and the school.

- Students are divided into small manageable groups.
- Sheets/cards are given to the students to find the answers.
- Another teacher/older student/parent may help in this activity.

Prior to filling out the survey a short litter walkabout takes place. Students and teacher(s) identify the main 'litter spots' in the school building and in the grounds of the building. This walkabout might take place a few times in the course of one day in order to assess the vulnerable times when litter is occurring.

Litter Survey		
Question		**Answer**
1.	Which areas of the school have the most litter?	
2.	When does most of the litter happen?	
3.	How many litter bins are there inside the school?	
4.	How many litter bins are there in the school grounds?	
5.	Is there a recycling container for cans?	
6.	What can we do about the litter problem?	
7.	How can we improve the litter problem in our school?	
8.	Do we need a school litter warden system in school?	
9.	Other questions.	

Exemplar 1: **SPEE: CSPE**

- Design a simple student/teacher questionnaire about school litter trouble spots.

- Conduct the survey with students and teachers:

    i)   arrangements made to go into another teacher's class

    ii)   distribute the questionnaire to the class

    iii)   discuss the results of the survey in class

    iv)   write a short report using ICT

    v)   write a thank-you note to teacher

    vi)   outline the results of the litter survey

    vii)   make recommendations to the staff/school management.

Other activities include

- Contact Environmental Information Service (ENFO) for material on recycling, litter awareness, landfill sites.

- Visit the ENFO exhibition centre or a nearby recycling unit.

- Invite a speaker into the class from the Tidy Towns organisation, local planning board, county council.

Exemplar 1: **SPEE: CSPE**

The Student Action Project of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

What is the Student Action Project?

> 'If students are to become active participatory citizens then they must be active participants in their own learning.'

The Student Action Project dimension of CSPE is introduced to students. The action project is one where the students are actively involved in developing an issue or topic, which has arisen in class beyond the usual limits of textbooks and course materials. It is based on one or more of the seven course concepts that include:

Democracy	Human dignity	Development
Rights and responsibilities	Interdependence	Law and stewardship

The Student Action Project should enable and encourage students to

- practice the skills associated with CSPE
- engage/communicate with other people or communities
- develop his/her knowledge and understanding of the subject of the action.

Students might undertake a survey of attitudes amongst students in their class or school about a particular school or local issue. They might identify a guest speaker to talk to the class on a topic of interest to them. They may organise a referendum/election at school level. Students develop skills in how to plan and to organise events of this kind and to disseminate the results. They learn how to gain access to information about local issues and community structures. It is envisaged that students are enabled to develop their skills associated with the participation in the democratic processes.

The following school-based action projects are suggested:

- the school environment
- human rights
- the school as a community.

Civic, Social and Political Education - Taking Action, A Guide to Action Projects and Their Assessment (www.ncca.ie).

15

Exemplar 2: **SPEE: CSPE**

Syllabus topic: Undertaking the action project | Vote right now!

Primary (5th and 6th classes)	Junior Certificate	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
Geography Strand: Environmental awareness and care **SPHE** Strand: Myself and the wider world	The Individual and Citizenship, concepts—community, stewardship, rights and responsibilities	The Individual, Community and Society

Time scale: The full range of learning and assessment activities presented in this exemplar may take up to 10 class periods.

Potential areas of difficulty

→ Understanding broad concepts, themes and issues in CSPE—democracy, rights citizenship and responsibilities

→ Vocabulary/language CSPE language—repetition and visual cues are regularly needed for students

→ Transfer to real-life situations—voting at school level and to voting at community, national and European levels

Strategies used in this exemplar

■ Structured discussion about why and how we vote and results of this activity

■ Introduce national issue of voting and relate to the immediate school setting

■ Use of concrete materials to engage students such as voting cards, register of electors, role of a student council

■ Issues of individual and community rights and responsibilities can be addressed through emerging school issues

Resources

• Voting cards

• Register of electors (available in the local library and Gardaí station)

• Video of the Dáil proceedings

• Students from the school's student council are invited to discuss issues with class members

Exemplar 2: **SPEE: CSPE**

Suggested outcomes	Supporting activities	Assessment strategies

As a result of engaging in these activities students should be enabled to
 	
• understand individual and community rights and responsibilities through the theme of voting
 	
• understand and have an awareness of what a vote is and how to vote at school and local level
 	
• illustrate voting trends in the class
 	
• identify some voting issues at school level
 	
• understand the various roles/ positions in the school (i.e. class captains, prefects, student council, Board of Management)
 	
• simulate an election at class level.
	• Students examine the role of a student council. The background to the setting up of this body may be obtained from a staff member. Students prepare a questionnaire and interview two members of the council. Responses may be tape-recorded.
	
	• Visit the local library to look at the register of electors. They find out how to register to vote.
	
	• Students demonstrate the use of voting cards and design their own personal voting card in art class.
	
	• The teacher videos Dáil proceedings. The class visits the Dáil and meets a local TD.
		Teacher assessment in:
		  – participation and interaction in group
		  – organising skills for class election
		  – reporting skills in giving feedback to each other
		  – presentation skills to school management.
		
		Peer assessment
		• Students quiz each other on their understanding of the terms used, small index cards have the answers recorded and students mix them up and check the answers. See Activity 1.
		
		• Students tabulate and display results of class election and explain orally their findings.
		
		• Students role-play an election at school/local level.
		
		• Students write a report of the visitor's meeting with the class. This may be presented as a conversion between two people and acted out by two students.
		
		• Students video and/or record the election proceedings.
		
		• Students display their work on voting in a poster format. This might include the use of photographs, information using ICT, art work etc.

Exemplar 2: **SPEE: CSPE**

Activity 1

Note: The terms, *votes, voting, election, local election, general election,* and *democracy* are introduced to the students using *Activity 1*.

#### Introduce the concept of voting
To introduce the students to the concept of voting carry out simple voting exercises with them. Some examples might include:

- *'Who is your favourite singer/band?'*

- *'What is your favourite television programme?'*

- *'What is your favourite subject?'*

- *'What is your favourite food?'*

How to record data or information
1. Using a show of hands students indicate their responses to the questions.

2. Using multiple intelligences method: *'Move to various areas of classroom if you agree/disagree with…'* 'If you voted for B or A, or C'. Voting with your feet/voting by moving is a novel approach for students. Students are asked to move to a particular area of the classroom. They can enjoy this activity and see clearly how the members of the class vote. As students become more competent with this approach the choices/issues may increase in complexity for example, students are asked if they think it is important to vote or to complete a census form.

3. Students record their responses using a variety of forms for example, using a record sheet, taping the responses, video recording the answers from class members.

4. The results are presented in tables and charts that are easily accessible for students using an ICT spreadsheet package.

Our favourite singers
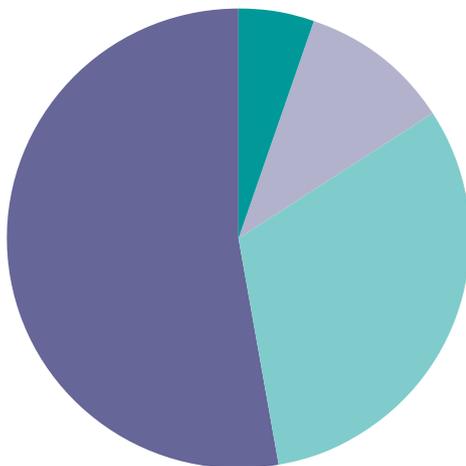
Exemplar 2: **SPEE: CSPE**

Gathering data

Students own interests may indicate other areas to vote on and this will depend on the input from classmates. The teacher could provide a list of a range of topics to choose from, for example

- hobbies

- sporting interests

- animals

- computer games

- music, groups, pop singers

- favourite teams

- favourite films/videos

- drink

- countries etc.

Student design a *record sheet* where responses are recorded and the various answers from class members are indicated.

Exemplar 2: **SPEE: CSPE**

Our favourite food
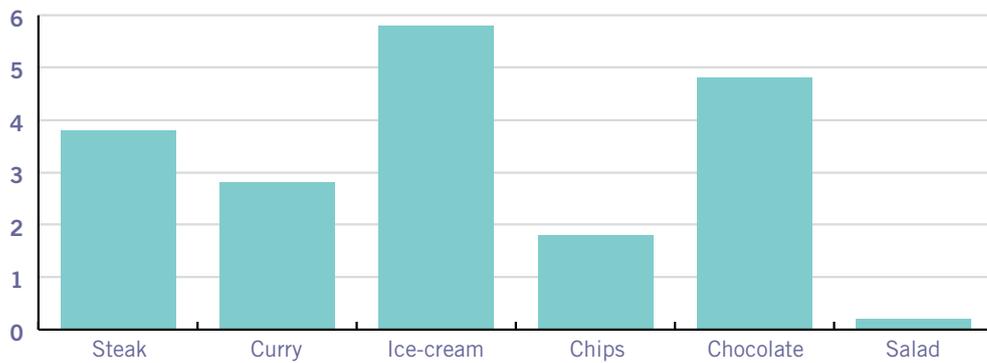
Extension activities

- Once students become familiar with the concept of voting in class, they may wish to survey another class or the year group about a pertinent issue that is of concern to them e.g. fund raising for a charity, non-uniform days, more litter bins. Use some of the survey techniques already mentioned in exemplar 1.

- Interviewing a member of the student or teaching organisation or a board of management is another way for students to exercise concepts of democracy, rights and responsibilities. See *Activity 2* for more ideas and details about this process.

- Students become more aware of issues in the national settings by using opportunities that relate to their own lives at home and in school. Once involved in practical real-life experiences, students can relate to them and then transfer this learning to those circumstances and issues that are evident at local and national levels.