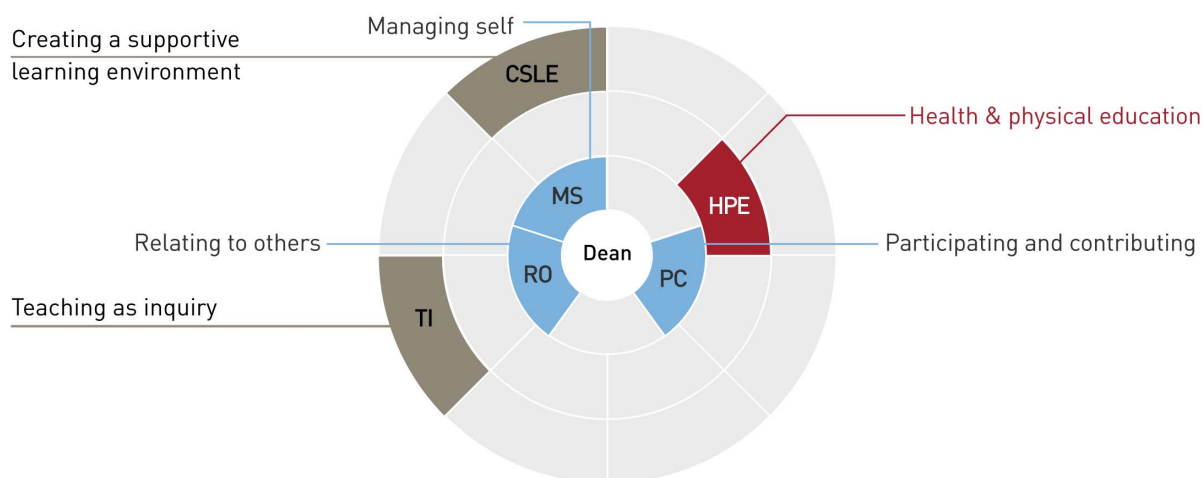


Going with Dean's strengths

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Dean	Dean has incredible hand-eye co-ordination and enjoys using Playstation at home. He has a permanent head injury and is deaf in one ear. He gets very tired and finds it difficult to follow instructions.
Age	14	
Year	9	
School	Secondary	

Dean receives funding support from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). This includes funding for a full-time teacher aide. Dean only began full-time schooling in his last term of year 8. Since term 4, 2007, we have worked with ACC, Dean's father, and Dean's previous school towards a successful transition to secondary school. We expect this process to take all of 2008. The main goal is to support Dean to engage in the classroom and to manage his behaviour so he can access the curriculum.

As learning team leader of the Learning Centre, my role is to oversee Dean's programme and help him, with the support of his family, make the transition to secondary school. I also co-ordinate the input from the ACC team, and oversee teacher aide support on a period-by-period basis.

A standard exercise book is used to record learning events for Dean. This is done primarily by his teacher aide and this information is shared with everyone who works with Dean and his family. These jottings have formed the basis of this string of learning stories. They also inform his individual education programme (IEP).

One string of learning stories

This string of learning stories (spanning terms 1 to 3, 2008) shows Dean settling into his new school. Dean begins to manage himself and relate to others more as his physical strengths are used to help him focus, and participate and contribute in his classes.

Going with Dean's strengths

Student	Dean	Date	February to September 2008
		Observer	Joan (team leader)

Dean was new to our secondary school this year. To begin with he faced significant challenges to stay on task, stay on site, keep safe, and engage with learning. His full-time teacher aide support initially involved at least two teacher aides. With Dean so unsettled, we decided to reduce the number of people supporting him and see if that made a difference.

22 February Today, Dean asked me if Brad could become his teacher aide. This was the first time Dean had asked for help and showed a connection with an individual at his new school. This idea worked in well with our thoughts and had come from Dean.

13 March Dean was getting listless in class so Brad took him outside to re-energise and re-focus. They had a few hits with a ball and Brad realised Dean was performing at a level well ahead of his peers. This was a significant turning point. We had been able to identify one of Dean's strengths and this helped Brad and Dean form a bond.

As a result of this discovery, we have used physical education as a motivator for Dean to complete work, stay on task, and re-energise himself when tired. A routine of 10 minutes work to five minutes physical activity seems to work well for Dean. This patterning has helped Dean make an adjustment to longer periods of learning and persisting with his learning. His ball skills are also improving!

ACC and the school developed a close relationship with Dean's father through weekly meetings to collaborate and help with consistency across settings. Dean was involved in this process. As a result of what we had noticed and our discussions, we looked for other ways to capitalise on Dean's prowess in sport. The goal he was working for was to attend and participate in inter-school soccer with other students with special education needs on Wednesday afternoons.

4 June This was Dean's first day at inter-school soccer. Not only did Dean participate fully, he also scored the winning goal. Dean became the hero of the moment and our secret weapon in the competition!

11 June Dean proved very popular and scored five goals today. It is great to see Dean shining in this way with his physical skills. The Wednesday competition has given him a whole new set of friends outside his own classroom and also mana in representing the school so well. He now greets and responds positively to other students who acknowledge him in the playground.

26 June Two or three times a week Dean goes with Brad to watch basketball. Today Dean was out of sorts so Brad suggested they watch a basketball training game in the gym. They were the only spectators. As they watched they discussed moves and the quality of the play. Brad realised that this was the first time he had noticed Dean thinking some of the moves through aloud.

Great strategising Dean!

We'll use this skill now as another way of developing your soccer moves. We wondered what other opportunities there were for Dean to join in sport safely at our school.

21 July



This term the physical education department has introduced activities for year 9 students at lunchtime. Today, Dean joined in the soccer for 20 minutes with Brad as goalie. It was great to see Dean able to join in successfully with his peers.

24 July

Dean worked hard in physical education today playing handball. He played well and made a real contribution to his team.

28 July

Today at lunchtime soccer, Dean was goalie and asked Brad to play goalie so he could play attacker. He did this safely and capably for 10 minutes. It was great to see Dean initiate a position change and cope well with it.

27 August

Today was the end of the winter sports season. This was celebrated with a special soccer tournament at Queen Elizabeth II Park. Dean scored six goals and the team won all their games. Dean's father played with the opposing team to counter Dean! They had fun sparring with each other and showing off their skills. It was good to see Dean communicating with his team, befriending others, and seeing other members of the team appreciating him.

Dean's father is happy that Dean is settling down at school and asking for help at home when he needs to. It is good to hear about the positive progress Dean is making as we work through strategies.

4 September

Dean participated in gymnastics at physical education today and did well. He tried all types of events. His class also played cricket and he hit the ball almost the length of the hall. Hurrah! A new sport to be part of for the summer season!

Mid September

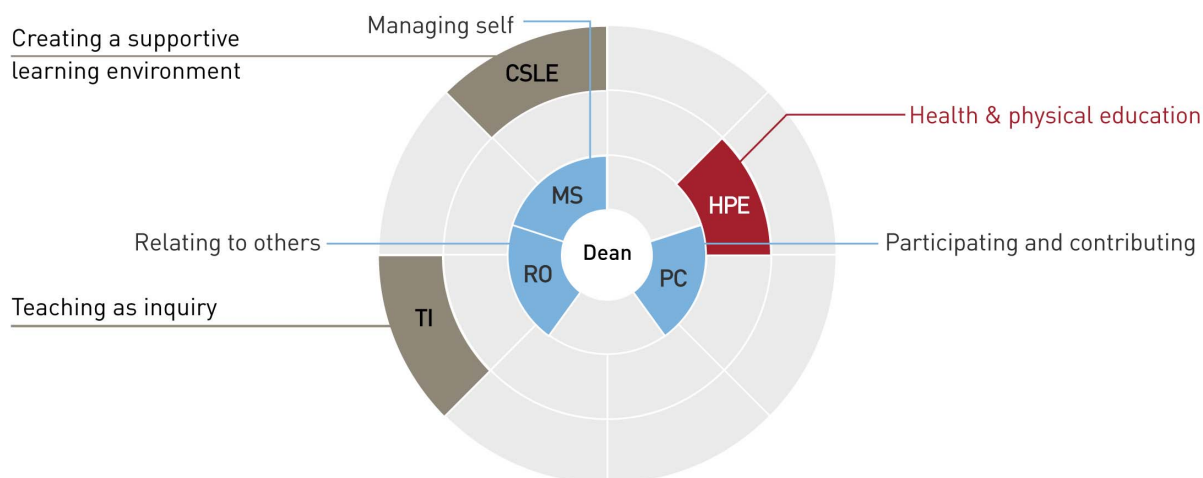
This week has brought back memories of earlier in the year. Checking with home, we found the family had shifted ahead of schedule and Dean was having real problems adapting to the change – he could not sleep, had a smaller bedroom, and so on. ACC workers offered support to help him with his new surroundings. That, together with the strategies we had developed earlier in the year, meant we were able to ride a few bumpy patches with Dean during this time.

25 September

In physical education today, Dean had a brilliant period where the class played games involved with gymnastics. Dean participated fully and enjoyed it. A gymnastics tutor worked with the class and Dean was fully involved and had a lot of fun. It is good to see him responding well again.

Next term, summer sport begins and we know that Dean has much to look forward to.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

This string of learning stories shows Dean participating and contributing more over time. It shows his increasing responsibility for his own behaviour and learning (managing self) as he gets to know others and feels valued at his new school (relating to others).

How might these stories strengthen Dean's identity as a learner?

Dean took the initiative by asking for a particular teacher aide to be his support person (agency). When Dean's physical abilities were noticed, Dean, the adults and students working with him, and his father went with his strength and used it as motivation for other learning, as well to develop his ball skills. This learning occurred over three terms (continuity) in class time, breaks, and at inter-school sport (breadth).

Dean has developed these competencies with the different people he works with: teacher aide, students, teachers, the ACC person, and his father (depth). Soccer and basketball opportunities have been the vehicles thus far.

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

Level 3 health and physical education: Movement Concepts and Motor Skills: movement skills

In getting to know his teacher aide, fellow students, and teachers at his new school, Dean is beginning to express his feelings and needs and to tune in to those around him. With increased opportunity, discussion, and skill practise, Dean has been developing his great ball skills.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

The staff uses a collaborative team approach at the school. This ensures a supportive learning environment for Dean. The team includes an ACC person and Dean's father.

The adults listen to what Dean has to say. They go with his strengths and are willing to explore what works for Dean and be flexible in their approach to his programme (teaching as inquiry).

Reflective questions for the reader

"How do you get the maximum benefit from a team approach to learning for students at your school?"

"What are the motivators and resources that are available to you and how do you use them to support learning?"

Useful resources

Davies, A., Cameron, C., Politano, C., & Gregory, K. (1994). *Together is better: Collaborative assessment, evaluation and reporting*. Peguis Publishers, Ltd.

Ministry of Education. (2002). *Kia tūtangata ai: supporting learning: an introductory resource for teacher-aides/kaiāwhina supporting teachers of students with special education needs*

The William Glasser Institute. Choice theory. Available at <http://www.wglasser.com/>.