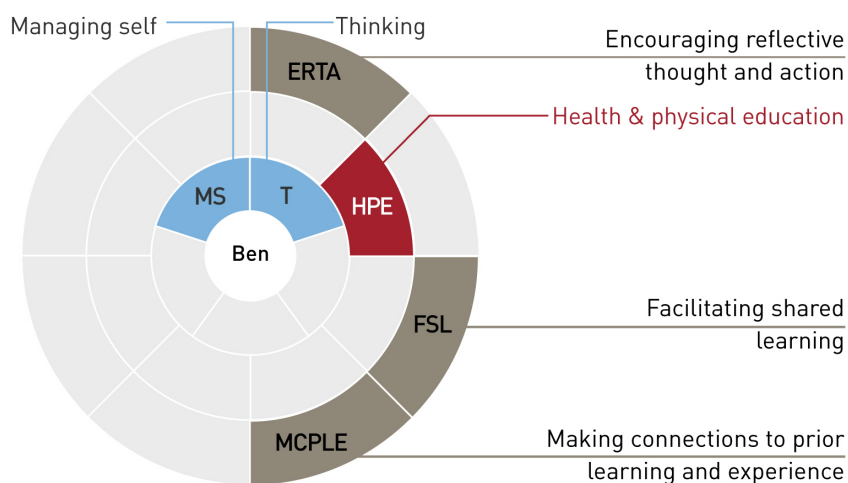


# Ben's good decisions at sport

## Links to the curriculum



## Student background

<b>Name</b>	Ben	Ben's strengths include reading, mathematics, and basketball. Ben is in a class with seven other students, two teachers and three full-time teacher aides at a special school.
<b>Age</b>	14	
<b>School</b>	Secondary	

Ben has developmental dyspraxia. Over the past two years we have been helping Ben to deal with social situations that he finds challenging; for example, participating with lots of different people at sport. Ben is successful at basketball because he has the necessary skills to participate, knows the people he is playing with (usually), and has a firm understanding of the rules. He also knows that he is good at basketball, so he is more likely to engage positively and can ignore some of the things that would upset him in other arenas.

Although Ben understands the rules of tee-ball and soccer, he is uncertain about the students from the other schools. The physical aspects of soccer add to his anxiety as he finds it difficult to differentiate between a legitimate tackle and an act of physical aggression.

## Two learning stories

- 1. Tee-ball** 19 March 2008
- 2. Sport at Hagley** 18 June 2008

This string of learning stories shows Ben managing himself during sport, thinking things through, and making good choices. By using these skills, Ben is able to participate more fully in these social activities.

## Tee-ball

<b>Student</b>	Ben	<b>Date</b>	19 March 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Sara (teacher)

This week, we had lots of discussion about how to have a successful and enjoyable time at sport and avoid conflict with other students, as there had been a flare up for Ben last week. Some suggestions from students included ignoring the other person, walking away, and asking for help from an adult. Ben's strategy was to find a member of staff who would support him to make a good decision if there was any problem. Ben was reminded of this before leaving school for our game.

Tee-ball had started and I was helping another student when I realised that Ben was looking a little flushed and was swearing. However, rather than confronting the person he was upset with, Ben walked to Paul (teacher), before heading to where I was. Ben was quite angry as he sat down next to me, facing away from the person he was angry with. I asked if he needed or wanted to go back to the van to help him calm down – he did not. I told him that he had made a really good choice to find help and that I was proud of him. He sighed, apologised for swearing, and said, "I'm ready to play again". He rejoined the line for batting and maintained his cool.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Ben demonstrated that he could follow the strategy that we had put in place. He recognised that he was reacting to the other student. He walked away from a situation that could have turned into an incident, found a member of staff to support him, and then turned his behaviour around.

### Key competencies

#### Managing self

- I can follow the rules.
- I can feel angry and still be safe.
- I can tell someone if I am not feeling good.
- I can make a mistake and be ok about it.
- I can make good choices even when others do not.

#### Participating and contributing

- I can join in.
- I can give it a go even when it seems hard.

#### Thinking

- I can make choices.

### Learning areas

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

- Express their own ideas, needs, wants, and feelings clearly and listen to those of other people.

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

- Demonstrate respect through sharing and co-operation in groups.

## Where to next?

### Celebrate and consolidate

We will remind Ben of this strategy before tee-ball and for any other sports commitments and use a visual prompt (e.g. a look or thumbs up) once at sport. Ben has demonstrated that he can recognise his feelings when he is becoming tense and angry, and find assistance. We will continue to support him in this. This will be achieved by reminding him of the indicators to becoming angry so he can act positively.

## Sport at Hagley

<b>Student</b>	Ben	<b>Date</b>	18 June 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Chris (teacher)

We have been working at developing strategies for Ben to cope with other students who irritate him, particularly at sports. Two strategies have been to talk to a teacher about the grievance and to ignore the behaviour. Ben has been trying these strategies out.

Today, at sport, there were several boys who displayed annoying verbal behaviour to Ben. He came up to talk to me about it and was able to cope when I said, "It's nothing Ben, just ignore it."

His response was to visibly relax and say, "Oh, okay".

Ben was able to enjoy the game without incident.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Ben found that the new strategies were able to work for him at sport. I think Ben liked the reassurance I was able to offer and the fact that he knew I knew he was working on good decision-making strategies and was I supporting him.

## Key competencies

### Managing self

- I can make good choices even when others do not.

### Thinking

- I can make choices.

## Learning areas

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

- Express their own ideas, needs, wants, and feelings clearly and listen to those of other people.

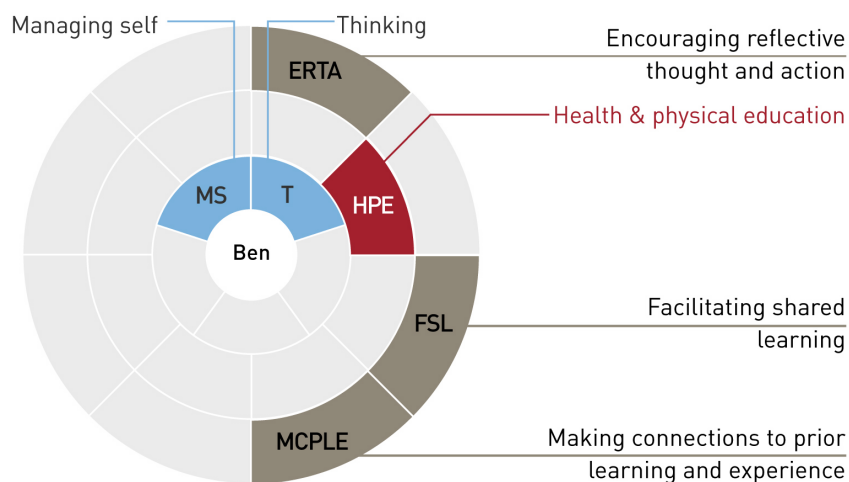
## Where to next?

### Celebrate and consolidate

We will continue to encourage Ben to practise those skills of talking to a teacher and ignoring the annoying behaviour.

## Reflection – what these stories exemplify

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### Key competencies

Managing self is at the foreground of Ben's learning, with thinking also highlighted for making appropriate choices. Participating and contributing also come through strongly in this string, and as this has always been one of Ben's strengths, the other two competencies have been highlighted.

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

Through these two learning stories, Ben demonstrated that he could take ownership of his behaviour and use different strategies to address his frustration (agency). The learning occurred at school sports in two different teams for tee-ball and soccer (breadth). Although the learning stories demonstrate learning across three months, they reflect one small part of Ben's recorded progress over two years (continuity). Ben has been increasingly able to take responsibility for his behaviour after working with his main classroom teacher for more than a year and with a second teacher from term 1, 2008 (depth). This string of learning stories illustrates that Ben is becoming more able to listen and respond to others and to accept prompts for his behaviour in relation to a variety of other students.

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

This learning links interpersonal skills, and identity, sensitivity, and respect. Ben tended to his own needs in ways that were respectful of others during sport.

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

Ben understands that we want him to be able to manage himself. Over the past two years, Chris has been working with Ben to provide him with strategies for dealing with difficult situations, reminding him of past positive choices and consequences in order to influence present decisions (making connections to prior learning and experience). Restorative justice (an approach now used in schools) has been helpful to Ben for working through friendship issues. By working within a restorative justice approach, Ben has accepted that he can listen to the other side of a story and, working with others, can find a solution to move forward, with friendships still intact.

Other strategies (such as walking away, finding a teacher, or ignoring) have been identified through class discussions (facilitating shared learning) to provide everyone with strategies for coping with situations that are stressful or anxiety provoking.

Ben is demonstrating his growing ability to manage himself and to take action with the support of his teachers and peers, giving him time, space, encouragement, and feedback as he implements positive choices (encouraging reflective thought and action).

### **Reflective questions for the reader**

“How do I encourage socially appropriate behaviours for my students?”

“What other support can I access to enable success for students like Ben in social situations?”

### **Useful resources**

Weblink. <http://www.autismnz.org.nz>

Weblink. <http://www.thegraycenter.org/>

Schroeder, A. (2000). *Socially speaking: a pragmatic social skills programme for primary pupils*. Cambridge, UK: Learning Development Association.

Weblink. <http://www.usevisualstrategies.com/>

Department for Courts. (2003). *Facilitator Training Manual*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Justice. <http://www.courts.govt.nz/crrj/manual/>. Downloaded 11 December 2003.