

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

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Teaching and Learning at Aitken College is linked to the three principal aims of the College: to inspire and challenge students to realise their intellectual potential, to incorporate values education into programs at all levels and to nurture creativity in its many forms.

1. Differentiation

The teaching methodologies and strategies used at Aitken College recognise the need to cater for the variety of learning styles and levels that students in a class bring with them. The College therefore emphasises varied delivery systems with a high level of interaction between students and teachers.

Learning programs are structured so that they provide experiences from each of the different learning styles or modalities. Units of work are prepared so that they offer a range of tasks, which will appeal to visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and technological learners. Learning programs are also structured to allow for all students to experience success, regardless of their pre-existing knowledge or skill levels. Activities are designed with multiple entry and exit points, so that all students are able to participate with an appropriate level of challenge.

Teachers are encouraged to provide activities that involve all of the levels of thinking outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy, rather than focussing primarily on knowledge and comprehension. Thus, teaching styles are designed to foster collaboration and empowerment of students and teachers and the creative exploration of subject matter at all levels.

2. Emphasis on Creativity

Programs at the College encourage students to express their creativity in its varied forms. Strong Creative and Performing Arts programs, conducted by specialist teachers, exist at all year levels. Students are encouraged to participate in Instrumental Music lessons and the associated ensembles. Creative and Performing Arts, Activities and Technology courses encourage the development of creative and manual skills. Students design and construct objects and art works, produce photographs, complete craft projects, perform musical and dramatic works, write plays, perform dances, program robots and design iPad apps and games. Students are encouraged to apply and build their knowledge in creative ways in many other subject areas, through problem-solving approaches in Information Technology and Mathematics, Web Quests and other research projects in Humanities and Integrated Studies, and through external programs such as the Science Talent Search. Emphasis is given to learning by creating something new, whether it is a poem, brochure, map, essay or presentation.

3. Values Education

The College is committed to providing opportunities for students to reflect on and develop their own system of values. The Religious and Values Education (RVE) and Life Skills programs provide avenues for teachers to discuss values and the importance of applying knowledge wisely and acting fairly and honestly in our daily lives. Christian values are espoused through the weekly Chapel services and RVE classes at all year levels. Students are encouraged to examine and discuss their own values systems and formulate a framework for ethical decision-making. This process continues into the senior years. VCE Religion and Society is offered as an elective subject in Years 11 and 12.

3. Student-Centred Learning

Teachers are also encouraged to structure lessons so that they are student-centred, with the teacher acting as a guide and organiser. Cooperative group work in this context allows students to undertake research and develop skills as life-long learners. Lessons are often structured to allow students choice in their learning activities. Problem solving skills and the ability to work as a part of a team are developed through open-ended activities and exercises.

4. Use of Technology

The use of appropriate technology is seen as an integral part of teaching and learning. Computers and iPads (with suitable software packages) are used in routine classroom applications and in the acquisition and development of problem solving skills.

5. Integrated Studies

Practical applications of the knowledge gained in each area of the curriculum are emphasised. Students in Years P-5 study Integrated Studies, which allow integration of skills and knowledge from a variety of different curriculum areas.

6. Resources

The following guidelines are used when selecting resource material:

- Illustrations and examples are appropriate for the age
- The material offers optional delivery systems
- Alternative activities for learning styles are infused
- An interdisciplinary approach is stressed
- Higher level critical thinking skills are included
- Cooperative learning strategies are suggested
- The materials are free of culture, gender, racial and religious bias
- The materials meet the required instructional objectives
- The materials are enhanced by the use of multimedia technology

7. Suggested Teaching/learning Strategies

Some of the strategies to be used in the classroom are:

- group activities, including practical work in Science
- individual guided research

- hands-on activities
- audio-visual presentations
- student produced multi-media presentations
- lecture style classes
- learning and activity kits
- discussions
- thematic approaches such as the use of music and drama in presentations in other subject areas
- short talks and presentations by students
- role-plays
- construction of models, dioramas, etc.

The 18 hectare semi-rural site provides unique opportunities for teaching and learning. Activities focussing on the environment are included in the integrated units at Years P-5, and in Science curricula in the secondary school. Ponding activities and water sampling are conducted in Brodies Creek, which runs through the property. Students are involved in the replanting of native grasses and other species along the valley. An Agriculture and Horticulture elective utilises the old farm buildings and an on-site greenhouse. The Kitchen Garden program uses a large on-site vegetable garden and gives Year 3 and 4 students the chance to grow and harvest their own food, which they then cook and eat. The school cross-country run, and other sporting activities such as orienteering, are conducted on the site.