

Modelling

Here's a detailed explanation and application of **modelling as a teaching strategy**, tailored to a **Queensland special school** context, supporting students from **Prep to Year 12** with diverse needs and curriculum levels.

What is Modelling as a Teaching Strategy?

Modelling is an explicit teaching method where the teacher **demonstrates a skill, behaviour, or cognitive process**, making thinking visible and guiding students through the expected steps. It is grounded in **social learning theory** (Bandura, 1977), which highlights that learners acquire new behaviours by observing others.

In special education, modelling is a **high-impact strategy** that:

- Clarifies expectations
- Reduces ambiguity
- Supports receptive and expressive communication needs
- Builds independence through **repetition and consistency**

Why Use Modelling in Special School Settings?

Students with intellectual disabilities, ASD, sensory processing challenges, or communication needs often require:

Multimodal input (visual, verbal, physical)

- **Frequent repetition and practice**
- **Clear, consistent routines**
- **Concrete examples over abstract explanations**
- **Modelling** meets these needs by reducing cognitive load and providing clear, scaffolded instruction.

Application Across Curriculum Levels (Prep–Year 12)

1. Highly Individualised Curriculum Plans (HICPs)

For students working well below Prep level, modelling focuses on foundational participation, communication, and sensory engagement.

Example:

Skill: Requesting using AAC

Model: Teacher uses PODD book to model “more music” during group time, pointing and saying the words

Support: Repeat 3–4 times during a session, with adult prompting and student hand-over-hand or gaze-based response

Outcome: Student imitates or initiates “more” over time

Other modelling tools: Gesture modelling, hand-over-hand, adult imitation of student actions (mirroring)

2. Partial Goals up to Year 1–2 Level

Students at this level may be developing early literacy, numeracy, and self-care skills.

Example A – English (modelled reading):

Skill: Sequencing events in a story

Model: Teacher uses picture cards after reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” to show the order of events, talking through each (“First he ate... next he... finally he became a butterfly.”)

Follow-up: Students match their own cards to the teacher’s model

Example B – Daily Living Skills:

Skill: Hand washing routine

Model: Teacher shows each step—turning on the tap, using soap, scrubbing, rinsing, drying—while saying each action aloud

Visual support: Step-by-step photo chart beside sink

3. Partial Goals up to Year 3 Level

Students working at or towards early primary curriculum levels may access more structured academic instruction.

Example A – Maths (patterning):

Skill: Creating AB patterns

Model: Teacher builds a red-blue-red-blue block pattern while speaking the colours aloud and pointing

Practice: Students replicate the model, then create their own

Example B – Social Skills (play modelling):

Skill: Taking turns

Model: Teacher plays a board game with another adult, narrating: "It's my turn now... I rolled the dice... now it's your turn."

Support: Students then play with adult help, using turn-taking cards

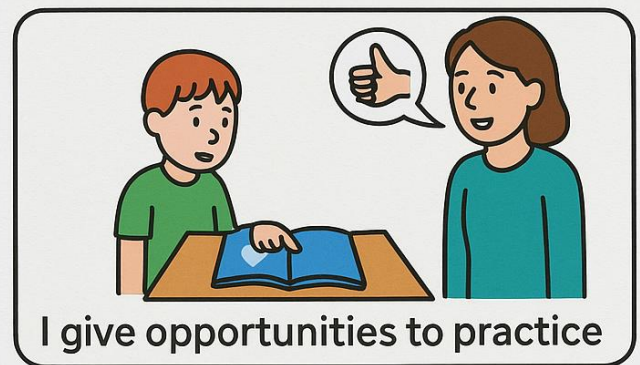
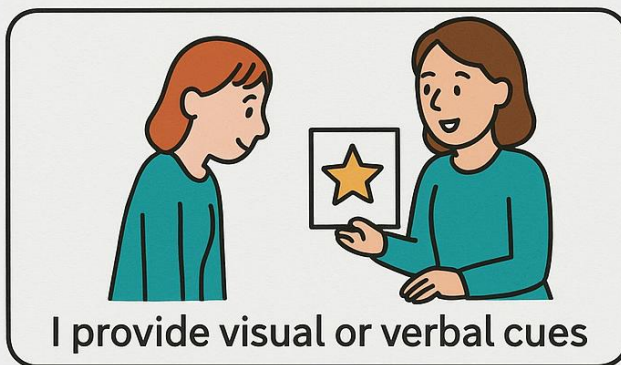
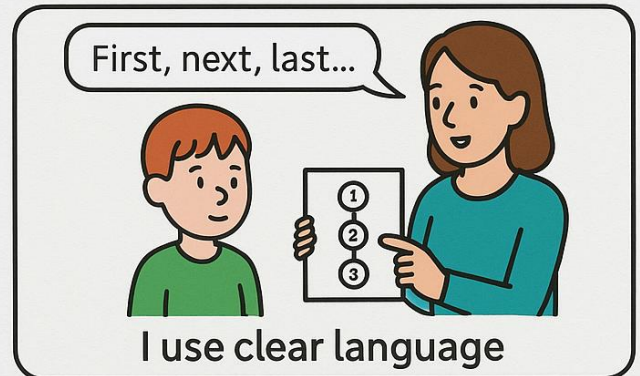
Strategies to Differentiate Modelling

Student Profile	Strategy	Example
Non-verbal student	Use visual modelling (pictures, videos)	Video shows a peer greeting others using sign
Sensory seeker	Use hands-on demonstration	Model how to push heavy objects safely in PE
Emerging communicator	Use partner-assisted scanning or PODD modelling	Teacher models "I want music" using PODD with aided language
Older student with moderate ID	Use peer modelling or step-by-step instructions	Peer demonstrates recycling procedure with visuals
ASD student	Use scripted social stories and video models	Model "how to join a group" using storyboard and role-play

Key Features of Effective Modelling

- Slow pace with clear language
- Repetition across time and contexts
- Multimodal supports: visuals, gestures, verbal cues
- Prompt fading and opportunity for independent practice
- Link to real-life and meaningful contexts (e.g., lunch, jobs, bus travel)

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Summary: Why Modelling Matters in Special Schools

Modelling bridges the gap between abstract expectations and concrete actions, making learning visible and achievable. It builds a foundation for independence, communication, and participation, aligned with the General Capabilities and Australian Curriculum (adapted) or HICP learning goals.