



## Demands and Capacities Tool

### Increasing safety and engagement in the classroom; decreasing dysregulation and disconnection

#### **A tool for matching lessons with students' capacities and making modifications for meeting them where they are at.**

This tool is based on the concept that dysregulation can often happen when the demands of the environment outstrip the capacities of the individual to cope. As educators we can sometimes forget how many demands the school environment and individual lessons can place on a student. A student who is already impacted by trauma may struggle even more. We may be able to reduce student disengagement and dysregulation if we can break down the skills, resources and abilities required for a session, reflect on our students' capacities to meet those requirements, and think about how we could modify those aspects so that we don't overshoot where a student is currently at.

This tool can be used as a training aid to help build educators awareness of the demands placed on students within their classroom environment / where dysregulation is likely to occur. It could also be used by educators as needed to look at where the potential lies within lessons to reduce student stress / threat / protective responses. For instance, if there is a student who is experiencing frequent states of dysregulation, staff may use this tool to bring their awareness to the demands within the environment that the student is presented with, where those demands may be overshooting the capacities of the student and looking at helpful modifications to make the lesson more accessible/ the environment more supportive.

Note that the skills, resources and abilities should consider, where relevant, factors such as home life, access to resources outside of the classroom, the impacts of trauma on such areas as memory, attention span, self-regulation etc, relational templates/ understanding accepted social norms and using social skills, a student's self-narrative (how they perceive themselves) and specific skills and knowledge.

Modifications might include removing or limiting some tasks/ transitions, providing additional support or scaffolding around a particular task, checking in with the student/s on how they are tracking at strategic points, providing prior foundational opportunities for students to practice skills such as group work skills i.e. giving them explicit simple instructions and modest group work tasks to develop the underlying skills before longer or more complex group work. Patience, understanding, a few minutes away to decompress and extra guidance may be all that's needed sometimes! Some modifications could already be addressed through learning support plans etc.

Educators are often time poor so identifying individual modifications may not be feasible or necessary if just identifying where the stressors may lie and allowing the educator to bring this awareness to their relationship and support of the students who need it.









## Example: Demands and Capacities Tool

<p><b>Lesson topic:</b> Studying a text to understand plot and character development...</p>		
<p><b>Types of activities involved:</b> (i.e., whole class, small group, individual, text and question focused, experiential component, discussion, written based)</p> <p>Whole class, small group, individual, text and questions, discussions, individual note taking, verbal answering of questions.</p>		
Skills, resources and abilities required	Potential for requirement to outstrip any of your students' capacities?	Modification?
Literacy competence to the level of the text	<p><b>Low</b></p>	Everyone's literacy level is adequate for the text. Could provide simple guide on characters and plot.
Capacity for self directed work at home (so they have read the text ready for the lesson)	<p><b>High</b></p>	<p>It's likely the student won't have read the text at home or done the preliminary work. As above; a simple summary might help.</p> <p>Make sure tasks allocated to the student doesn't require specific knowledge about the novel. Focus on ways for them to feel useful and engaged with the work and peers outside of specific content input; i.e. get student to hand out flip chart paper/ pens and then gather all the groups flip chart paper with their responses and stick to wall.</p>
Home environment conducive to reading	<p><b>High</b></p>	Audio version? May not be realistic. Do as above.
<p>Social skills in group work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impulse control</li> <li>• turn taking</li> <li>• articulating ideas to peers</li> <li>• listening and language comprehension</li> <li>• verbal and non verbal cues of engagement</li> <li>• felt sense of safety in relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b>High</b></p>	Organise groups strategically. Provide list of roles within group task and assign students. Give a single focus or only a couple of questions to answer (according to the groups capabilities). Keep groups to four maximum. Have a student with sound note taking skills to note down group responses in large print (flip chart)



# Trauma informed schools professional learning program

		paper) to present to whole class and for others to copy down.
Self-esteem / confidence to engage	<p><b>High</b></p> 	Give role that student can cope with and undertake to allow success and sense of usefulness.
Ability to focus and hold attention	<p><b>Moderate</b></p> 	Small group work tasks kept to no more than 10 mins each. Student allocated role to meet their capability; roles that only require short burst of concentration for those that struggle to focus. Brain breaks. Mix simple tasks, such as copying, with more demanding cortical tasks. Body breaks; allow short breaks where the student can move/ stretch. Recognise when a student is flagging and allow rest.
Knowledge of note taking skills	<p><b>High</b></p> 	As above – allocate group note taking to capable student; individuals to copy, provide key word glossary, provide a structure of note taking i.e. 3 points related to characters, must include xyz available if student wants it.
Ability to transition between whole class work to group work to individual work	<p><b>Moderate</b></p> 	Limit to three transitions; whole class to small group and finish with quiet individual work. Bridge transitions with body stretch, breathing exercise, quick lateral brain challenges.
Organisation of necessary materials such as pen, paper and copy of text.	<p><b>Low</b></p> 	Have spares!
Self-regulation	<p><b>High</b></p> 	Use whole class self-check in system every lesson (wall chart). If student identifies possible dysregulation or I observe it, connect with them, have regulating resources available, give simple supporting task outside of group work, whatever else they have previously identified as soothing.

