Timetabling principles

Ratified by the Aurora State Reference Group on 27 May 2024

AURORA COLLEGE

Broad partnership principles and the common timetable template

When a student enrols in Aurora College they become a shared enrolment between Aurora and their home school. In this educational partnership, both schools plan for and support the curriculum of each shared enrolment to meet the individual needs of each student. The operational model of Aurora College is based on face-to-face, real time lessons. The face-to-face model connects students with their teachers and a peer group of students of similar ability. Teachers use a range of technologies, including web conferencing software and a range of communication and collaboration platforms to provide personalised learning and immediate, personalised feedback on learning.

This model requires each partner (home) school to build their timetable from a common timetable template which is developed by Aurora and is based on data collected from rural and remote schools across the state. To support maximum curriculum alignment and a smooth timetabling process, Aurora provides the common timetable template for the following year to all rural and remote government schools in June of the preceding year and provides practical support to each partner school to ensure curriculum alignment for each student.

Students in Years 7 to 10 gain entry to Aurora College via the NSW Selective High Schools Placement Process. Students in Years 5 and 6 gain entry via the NSW Opportunity Class Placement Process. As soon as Aurora is aware of the offers to be made to students for the following year, the Aurora principal contacts the home school principal to flag the potential partnership and provides information about Aurora. Aurora requests ITD check and address any bandwidth concerns at this stage.

The NSW Department of Education's High Potential and Gifted Education Policy draws on Françoys Gagné's definitions of giftedness and talent established in the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent DMGT 2.0 (2009). The definition of high potential students across intellectual, creative, social-emotional and physical domains expands the group of targeted students of earlier policies.

The policy states that: "High potential and gifted students across all domains require evidence-based talent development to optimise their growth and achievement." The policy requires schools to have learning and teaching programs that "extend high potential and gifted students beyond their current level of mastery, as informed by assessment, data and evidence." The policy also requires schools to "collaborate with other schools and organisations to offer learning opportunities that address advanced learning needs."

Learning environments which support the social-emotional development and wellbeing of high potential and gifted students enables them to connect, succeed and thrive. The policy states that "schools have a responsibility to create learning environments that support high potential and gifted students to experience efficacy, agency and achieve their educational potential." The policy also states that "Grouping strategies for high potential and gifted students should be purposeful and support differentiation of curriculum and learning experiences."

Aurora College and all other NSW selective high schools, help a selection of high potential and gifted students in the state to learn by grouping them with students of similar ability, using specialised teaching methods and materials. The Department's High Potential and Gifted Education Policy supports the inclusion of Year 5 to 10 Aurora College students in home school groupings which address their advanced learning needs and enhance their social-emotional development and wellbeing.

Bearing in mind the requirements of the High Potential and Gifted Education Policy, for those parts of the curriculum delivered by the partner school, Aurora College students in Years 5 to 10 should be placed in classes which best cater for their advanced learning needs and social-emotional development and wellbeing. In the majority of partner schools, the most appropriate placement will be in the cohort's 'top stream' class. Although a relatively rare occurrence, should the Aurora model of teaching and learning not be suitable for any student and they elect to return to mainstream classes, they would need to be fully accommodated in the partner school's high potential and gifted education program. Partner schools are advised to plan accordingly.

Aurora responsibilities	Check	Partner school responsibilities	Check
• Develop the common timetable template using data from R&R secondary and central schools. The draft common timetable template is independently reviewed by commercial timetable expert (EDVAL) and recommendations incorporated.		• Review the common timetable template in June-July to identify any possible issues	
• Utilise the data gathered and the expertise of the Aurora SRG to ensure flexibility for partner schools is considered alongside the learning needs of each Aurora student.		• Home school principal and timetabler(s) contact Aurora principal and timetabler as soon as issues are identified to develop an agreed solution using the common timetable template as a starting point. If necessary, discuss with parents and relevant school staff. Utilise timetabling resources on the Aurora website.	
• Provided common timetable template to all partner and potential partner schools by the end of Week 9, Term 2 of the preceding year.		• Inform Aurora principal/DP of any bandwidth and/or other IT concerns as soon as practical. Bandwidth issues will be followed up by Aurora whenever they are raised. • Develop a home school template from the common timetable template. • Identify the 'group' (pink or green) on common template that achieves best alignment for each student. Notify Aurora of selected groups by Term 4, Week 2.	
• Contact each school personally – principal to principal and timetabler to timetabler in June-July (after common timetable template is released).		• Inform local DEL of issues and proposed solution; DEL confirms Aurora is aware of issues and seeks support from Aurora (if required)	
• Develop an agreed solution using the common timetable template. If necessary, discuss with parents.		• If the home school timetable is changed, inform Aurora timetabler of the changes and ensure common timetable template remains embedded in home school template	
• Provide (and fund) PL and/or other support for home school timetable team		• Provide basic (skeleton) student timetables, and the names of the ACC and science practical coordinator by Term 4, Week 4. Provide updated copies if/when the timetable is changed.	

The common timetable template and the role of the Aurora State Reference Group (the SRG)

The Aurora State Reference Group (SRG) meets monthly to monitor the implementation of the operational model, and for two full-day workshops to develop the operational model for the following year. There is broad stakeholder representation on the SRG. Members of the SRG regularly report to and seek feedback from their stakeholder groups. Aurora staff support the work of the SRG through data collection from partner schools, staff, students and parents.

Aurora staff develop the common timetable template using data from primary, secondary and central schools in NSW – school start and finish times, bell times, lesson lengths, number of periods each day, number of periods per cycle and other local factors or constraints (eg collegiate constraints, sport or TAFE days) identified by principals. An external timetabling expert (EDVAL) is used to check and verify the common timetable template maximises options for partner schools to work from the common timetable template.

Aurora staff work directly with each partner school to ensure maximum timetable alignment. There is direct contact, principal to principal and timetabler to timetabler. The bulk of this communication happens in the 4-6 weeks after the Aurora schedule is provided, and again throughout November and December of the preceding year. The purpose of this contact is to maximise communication, provide personalised support and to negotiate a resolution where the home school cannot achieve a full match of the common timetable template. Directors Educational Leadership are included in written communications sent to each of their schools concerning preparation for the following year.

Aurora requests the basic 'skeleton' timetable for each student be provided by Week 8, Term 4 of the preceding year. This basic timetable does not need to include teacher names or rooming and is used to finalise the timetables of Aurora teachers. The timetables are also individually entered into Aurora's instance of SENTRAL to ensure accurate monitoring of attendance and minutes taught. This is a complex task and an important step in ensuring effective support for and tracking of all students. If a school cannot provide the student timetable, and/or the name of the ACC and science practical coordinator by the end of Week 8, Term 4, the Aurora principal should be informed so that the impact on workloads in both the home school and for Aurora teachers can be well managed.

Resolving issues

1. The NSW Selective High Schools Placement Process and the NSW Opportunity Class Placement Process do not require parents to have the approval of the home school principal when accepting a place with Aurora. The home school accommodates parent choice by building the home school timetable from the common timetable template. This requires an ongoing partnership between the home school and Aurora College. Aurora College will provide advice, assistance and additional funding to partner schools to support and sustain an effective partnership.
2. Issues arising from the need to build the home school timetable from the common timetable template are best resolved informally and on a case-by-case basis between the two principals.
3. Resolution should start with a discussion in June-July of the preceding year (as soon as possible after the common timetable template is received).
4. Where issues cannot be resolved by the two principals, either principal and/or the student's family may seek assistance from the Director(s) Educational Leadership for the home school and/or Aurora College. The two directors will work together, in consultation with both principals, the student and his/her family, and guided by these principles, to resolve issues and to determine the best outcome(s) for each student.

Resources and key contacts for partner schools

A range of resources have been developed to assist partner schools to build their timetable from the common template. These are available on the Aurora website at: https://aurora.schools.nsw.gov.au/partner-schools/resources .

Principal	Timetable support	Technology support
Chris Robertson Principal, Aurora College **T:** 1300 287 629 **E:** christopher.robertson@det.nsw.edu.au	David Wassink Head Teacher Secondary Studies **T:** 1300 270 231 **E:** timetables@aurora.nsw.edu.au	Ben Hillsley Learning Technologies Support Officer **T:** 1300 610 733 **E:** support@aurora.nsw.edu.au