National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Explaining Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Introducing…

[insert your child's name]

[use this image or insert a photo of your child]

About this booklet

This booklet was originally developed by FASD-CAN Inc in New Zealand and has been adapted by NOFASD Australia. It is designed to assist parents and other caregivers to broadly explain FASD to teachers and to provide individual information about a child which is helpful in building a relationship and supporting the child and their family at school.

FASD - a varied disability

If you know one person with FASD…

…then you know one person with FASD

About NOFASD Australia

The National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders is a non-profit organisation supporting individuals and families living with FASD and the professionals who work with them. We have a helpline available 7 days per week for anyone with questions or concerns about FASD and our website provides downloadable documents and links to a large number of useful resources for parents and carers, teachers and other professionals. Our website also provides a number of webinars, videos and links to training opportunities if you wish to learn more about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Phone: 1800 860 613
Email: admin@nofasd.org.au
Web: www.nofasd.org.au

About FASD-CAN Inc

FASD-CAN (Care Action Network) is a non-profit organisation established to primarily provide support for parents, caregivers, and whanau who are living with, or supporting, an individual with FASD. Their objective is to unite caregivers, strengthen families, support individuals and educate about FASD across communities.

Email: enquiries@fasd-can.org.nz
Web: www.fasd-can.org.nz

Useful websites:

NOFASD's resources for teachers: https://www.nofasd.org.au/service-providers/education/

FASD Hub Australia: https://www.fasdhub.org.au/

South Australian Department of Education: https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health-e-safety-and-wellbeing/health-support-planning/managing-health-education-and-care/neurodiversity/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term used to describe the lifelong physical and/or neurodevelopmental (brain) impairments that can result from prenatal alcohol exposure. Individuals with FASD can experience complex physical, behavioural, learning and sensory difficulties which persist throughout the lifespan.

Individuals with FASD are born with a diverse range of cognitive impairments. Every person is unique. There is no one support or strategy which works for all children with FASD. The effects of prenatal alcohol exposure can include impairment in:

- Brain structure / neurology
- Motor skills
- Cognition
- Language
- Academic achievement
- Memory
- Attention
- Executive function (includes impulse control and hyperactivity)
- Affect / emotion regulation
- Adaptive behaviour and social skills

Research has consistently found the brain to be the organ most sensitive to the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol. Because of this, IQ can be impaired but is not always impaired. IQ scores recorded for individuals living with FASD range from 45 – 120 and above, so cannot be used as the only measure for FASD. Children with FASD can have IQ in the average or high range but still struggle with severe impairments in the above domains.

FASD is considered an invisible disability because there are usually no physical signs. It is important to remember that FASD is brain damage, regardless of what you see. An individual with FASD experiences daily challenges as do all those who support and work with them. However, with well-informed understanding and a shift toward strength-based support, individuals with FASD have a much greater chance of reaching their full potential.

Confidential family information

Name: .....

Date of birth: .....

Nationality: .....

Who else is in our home? [***describe family situation – mum/dad/siblings/pets***]

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Who else is important to us? [***describe anyone else who helps or influences the family – grandparents, aunties, uncles, friends, neighbours]***

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Medications:

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Other professionals/organisations working with us: .....

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Other:

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[Anything else relevant – children adopted/fostered? Early beginnings? Co-existing conditions?]

Some examples of strengths & challenges

Strengths	Challenges
Some parents have found their child to: • Be active - often athletic with sporting aptitude • Often practical, hands-on learners • Have good verbal skills – often chatty and engaging • Can be good with animals and younger children but sometime not • Loyal and friendly • Generous, helpful and eager to please • Perseverance • Creative – artistic, musical	• Poor working memory • Slow auditory pace • Often speak better than they understand [poor comprehension] • Behaves younger than actual age • Sensory issues • Easily distracted • Difficult to move from fixations • Upset by change of any kind • Inability to sit still and concentrate for long periods of time • Spikey learning pattern (good one day, not able to remember the next) • Slower pace of learning • Impulsive with some risky behaviours • Can rage or 'melt-down' if unable to communicate frustrations any other way • Inability to plan and organize self • Easily fatigued

Strengths and challenges of _____

Strengths	Challenges

Strengths and interests

Interests and skills can be used as a strengths-based educational tool as part of the curriculum. Examples can be found on pages 11 – 15.

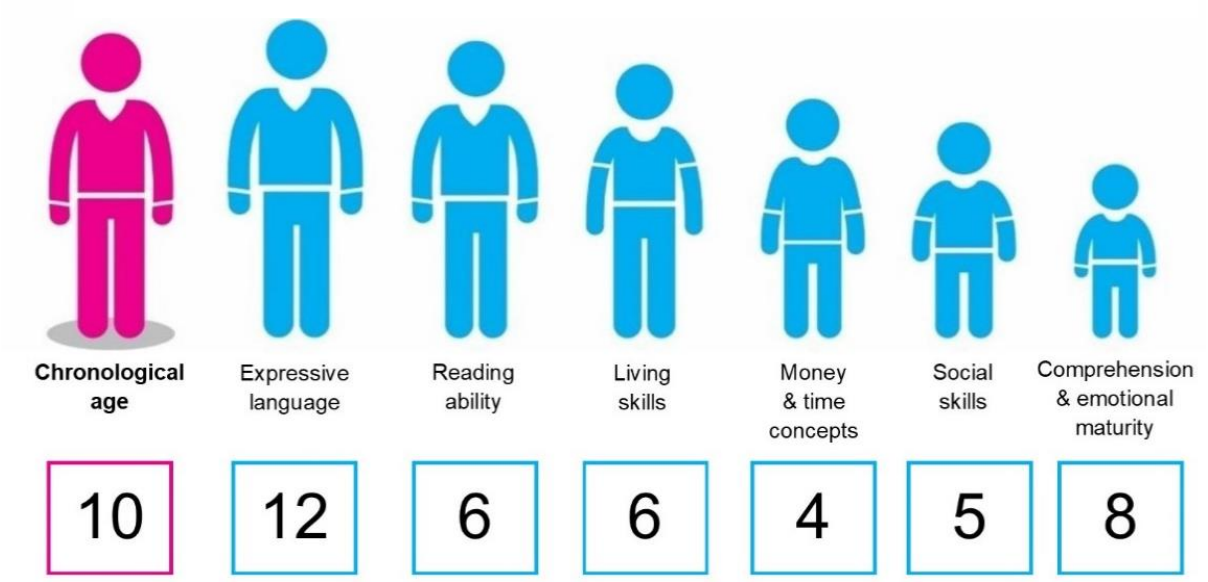
Child's interests		
Interest	**How to use that interest**	**Aligning to curriculum**

Developmental dysmaturity

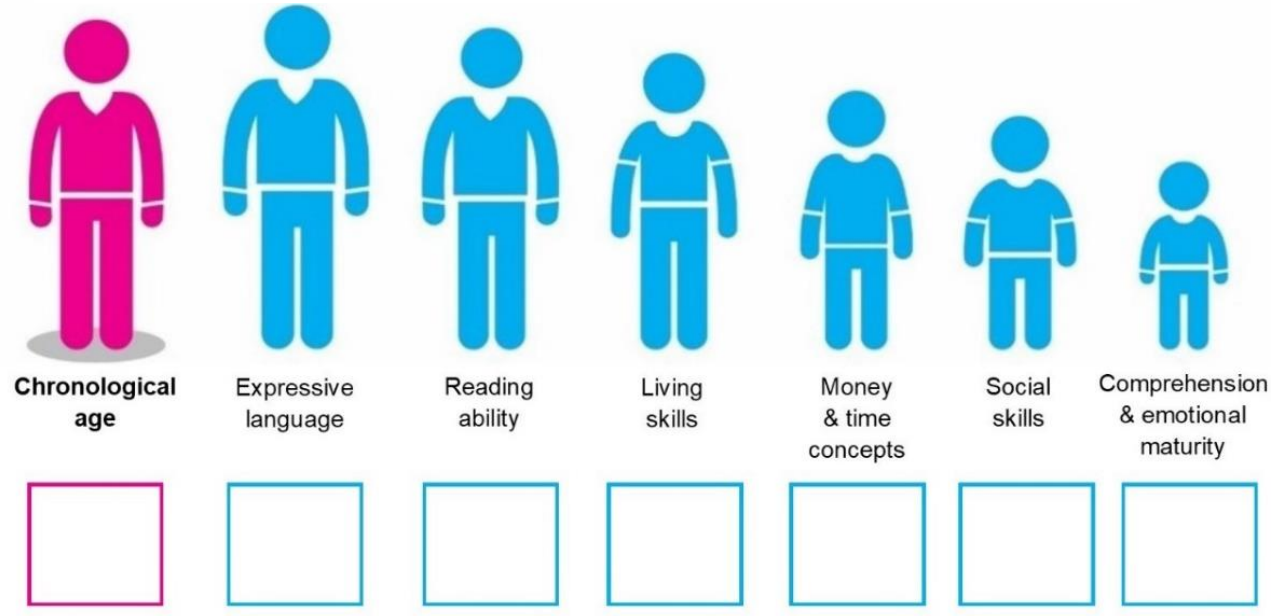
For children with FASD, developmental age and chronological age often do not correspond. The child's developmental age is often less advanced than their chronological age, which can be complicated and varying for each child. It is helpful to "think younger" when teaching a child with FASD, as this will reduce the frustration both the child and teacher feel when expectations are not being met.

To further complicate matters, children (and adults) with FASD often develop skills at differing levels, depending on their individual pattern of brain impairment. Every child is unique and may have different developmental ages in different skill areas. In the example below, a 10-year-old may have the expressive language skills of an older child but the language comprehension skills of a younger child.

An example of developmental dysmaturity for a child aged 10 years of age:



The developmental age, in varying domains, identified for _____



What teachers can do to help

- Learn about FASD and how best to support (see useful websites).
- Show, don't tell. Use visual cues and provide opportunities for hands-on learning.
- Allow time out / quiet environment.
- Don't expect them to be organised. Help by providing basic equipment.
- Provide visual reminders.
- Help to 'get started' each day.
- Check back to see how they are going. Don't expect them to ask for help.
- Give instructions one at a time. Repeat yourself often and without irritation.
- One-on-one tuition works well.
- Allow movement if necessary (often kinetic learners).
- Communicate well with parents – initiate a home/school communication book.
- Keep things as routine as possible. Manage change in a step-wise fashion.
- Provide close supervision during unstructured times (interval/lunch breaks, sports days etc).
- Allow extra time for completion of tasks.
- Praise often.

What parents/caregivers would like you to understand

- We are often exhausted and stressed.
- Extra expectations from school adds to the stress at home.
- We need you to work with us and listen to us.
- We worry about people misunderstanding our child's behaviour as wilful misconduct.
- We are upset by the school and community thinking that behaviours resulting from brain damage are due to our poor parenting abilities. We need support and encouragement, not judgement and condemnation.
- We worry about our children's social interactions and their ability to make or keep friends. They are easily led and we don't want them falling in with the wrong crowd.
- Eating, toileting, taking medications and timekeeping during the day can be difficult for a child with FASD.
- We are not making any of this up.

Emergency Contacts

1) P: ..... E: .....

2) P: ..... E: .....

3) P: ..... E: .....

4) P: ..... E: .....

Other information

[FASD is very individual. Please add any other information about you or your child which you think will help teachers know and understand your child and family better]

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For assistance with preparing this document, please feel free to contact NOFASD Australia on 1800 860 613

Examples for integrating strengths and interests into curriculum

Level 5 Victorian Curriculum is covered in the following examples:

English

Literacy

- Reading and reviewing: Interpreting, analysing, evaluating – analyses the text structure and language features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text
- Writing: Creating texts – plans, drafts and publishes imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience.
- Writing: Creating texts – read and edits own and others work using agreed criteria for text structures and language features.
- Writing: Creating texts – develop a handwriting that is becoming legible, fluent and automatic.
- Speaking and listening: interacting with others clarifies understand of content as it unfolds in formal and informal situations, connecting ideas to students own experiences, and present and justify a point of view or recount an experience using interaction skills

The Arts

Music

- Music practices – develops and practice technical skills and use of expressive elements of music in signing, playing instruments, improvising, arranging and composing.
- Respond and interpret – explains how aspect of the elements of music are combined to communicate ideas, concepts and feelings by comparing music from different cultures, times and locations.

Health and Physical Education

Personal, Social and Community Health

- Being healthy, safe and active – plans and practises strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing.
- Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing – practises skills to establish and manage relationships.
- Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing – examines the influence of emotional responses on behaviour, relationships and health and wellbeing.
- Contributing to healthy and active communities – explores how participation in outdoor activities supports personal and community health and wellbeing and creates connections to the natural and built environment.

Mathematics

Statistics and Probability

- Chance – recognise that probabilities range from 0 to 1.
- Data representation and interpretation – poses questions and collect categorical or numerical data by observation or survey.

- Data representation and interpretation – constructs displays, including column graphs, dot plots and tables, appropriate for data type, with the use of digital technologies.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Questions and Possibilities

- Identifies and forms links and patterns from multiple information sources to generate non-routine ideas an possibilities.

Reasoning

- Considers the importance of giving reasons and evidence and how the strength of these can be evaluated.

Technologies

Design and Technologies

- Technologies Contexts – investigates characteristics and properties of a range of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment and evaluate the impact of their use.
- Creating Design Solutions – critiques needs or opportunities for designing, and investigate materials, components, tools, equipment and processes to achieve intended designed solutions.
- Creating Design Solutions – generates, develops, communicates and documents design ideas and processes for audiences using appropriate technical terms and graphical representation techniques.
- Creating Design Solutions – applies safe procedures when using a variety of materials, components, tools, equipment and techniques to produce designed solutions.
- Creating Design Solutions – negotiates criteria for success that include considerations of environmental and social sustainability to evaluate design ideas, processes and solutions.
- Creating Design Solutions – develops project plans that include consideration of resources when making designed solutions.

Examples for level 5		
Interest	**How to use that interest**	**Aligning to curriculum**
Music – learn about and to play the drums	Learn about the history of drums and any other interesting information, by researching from a variety of resources such as the internet and library. Develop literacy skills by writing a brief summary of the information learnt.	**English** **The Arts**

	Take part as a team member in a band and develop social skills as a part of this group. Mathematical skills will continue to be developed from learning about timing and rhythm/beats. Self-awareness skills will be developed by as the benefits of music as a form of relaxation and meditation are felt.	**Health and Physical Education** **Mathematics** **Critical and Creative Thinking**
Football	Use English skills to write a text about football. Eg: • Football story • Game re-count • Report about an incident • Write about a upcoming game. Plan a game using strategies, evaluations and predictions. Develop social skills by exploring how team work effects the result of a game and the mental health of players. Develop a schedule for a player to ensure they are able to attend training. Develop maths skills by scoring, developing a tipping system and using statistics to predict future games.	**English** **Mathematics** **Health and Physical Education** **Critical and Creative Thinking** **Mathematics**
Woodwork - making a bird feeder	Planning - reading the plan to make the feeder. Calculating the amount and cost of the materials used to make the feeder. Use of tools to make the feeder.	**English** **Mathematics** **Technologies**

Level 8 Victorian Curriculum is covered in these examples

The Arts

Visual Communication Design

- Explore and Represent Ideas - explore and apply methods, materials, media, design elements and design principles to create and present visual communications.
- Visual Communication Design Practices - use manual and digital drawing methods and conventions to create a range of visual communications.

Visual Arts

- Explore and Express Ideas - explore visual arts practices as inspiration to explore and develop themes, concepts or ideas in artworks.
- Explore and Express Ideas - explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in art works.
- Visual Arts Practices - experiment with materials, techniques, technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes in artworks.

Mathematics

Statistics and Probability

- Data representation and interpretation - distinguish between a population and a sample and investigate techniques for collecting data, including census, sampling and observation.

Science

Science Understanding

- Biological sciences - there are differences within and between groups of organisms; classification helps organise this diversity.

Science Inquiry Skills

- Questioning and predicting - identify questions, problems and claims that can be investigated scientifically and make predictions based on scientific knowledge.
- Communicating - communicate ideas, findings and solutions to problems including identifying impacts and limitations of conclusions and using appropriate scientific language and representations.

Examples for level 8		
Interest	**How to use that interest**	**Aligning to curriculum**
Drawing	Tracing a photo of a bird then transferred to paper – exploring different techniques to obtain the picture wanted.	**The Arts**
Bird Photography	Photograph and record the names and numbers of birds seen on a 30 minute walk. Compare with any other data recordings from reliable sources such as e-bird.	**Mathematics**
Bush walking	Identify a wattle that has two types of leaf. Photograph and investigate.	**Science**