



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

*Inclusionary
Practices
Handbook*

March 2021 DRAFT

INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES HANDBOOK

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Acknowledgements

OSPI is grateful to the advisory committee members whose contributions were instrumental for the development of this handbook.

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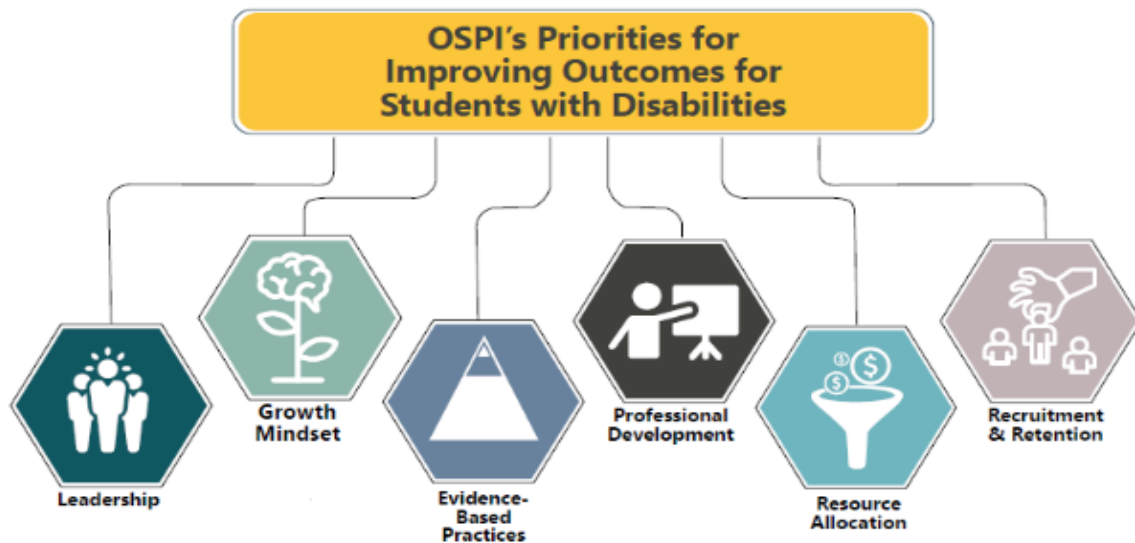
INTRODUCTION

The Inclusionary Practices (IP) Handbook is an Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) guidance document on inclusionary practices for educators, families, and school administrators in Washington state. The handbook highlights the integration of systems in education that support inclusion, while providing detailed guidance and resources for groups that are integral for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. The IP handbook guidance is structured into the four sections below:

Inclusionary Practices Handbook:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An Instructional Guide for Inclusive Educators2. Early Childhood Inclusive Practices3. A Family Guide to Inclusion4. A Leadership Guide for Inclusion
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The IP handbook guidance is aligned with the Washington State Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project¹ (IPP) launched in 2019. This project involves the coordination of organizations and districts to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms through statewide professional development. IPP is driven by OSPI Priorities for Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities: Leadership, Growth Mindset, Evidence-Based Practices, Professional Development, Resource Allocation, and Recruitment and Retention (Figure 1).

Figure 1: OSPI Priorities for Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities



The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical guidance for teachers, schools, districts, and families on inclusionary practices in Washington state. The introduction includes the foundation of policy and research that supports the provision of inclusion in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. Subsequent sections will provide specific guidance on strategies for implementing inclusionary practices in preschool through age 21.

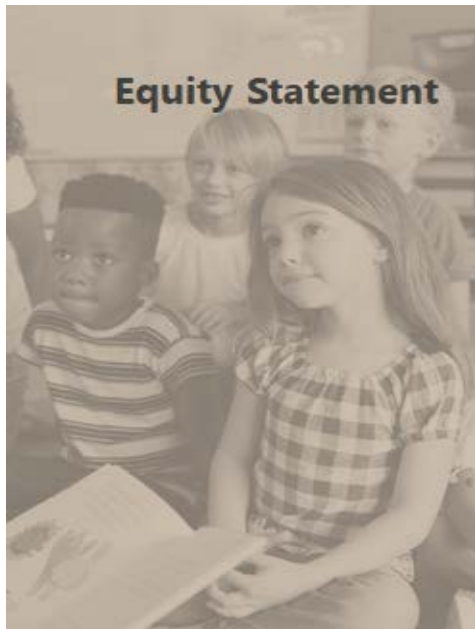
¹ OSPI (2019) [Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project](#).

Inclusion as a Priority in Education

Inclusion is characterized as a sense of belonging in community and applies broadly to every learner and all environments. Research on learning and human development clearly states that a sense of belonging, safety, and attention to individual needs and backgrounds is essential for all students to learn and thrive in any learning environment.² Inclusive schools are dedicated to embracing diversity and supporting the unique needs and attributes of every student regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability. This commitment to the inclusion of every student in education is reflected in the OSPI Equity Statement (Figure 2):

Figure 2: OSPI Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possess strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.



Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English language learning services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA legislation in the United States guarantees equal rights in public education for students with disabilities through age twenty-one. It was inspired by the civil rights movement and goes beyond Section 504 civil rights protections from discrimination. IDEA regulates federally funded mandates that support a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students whose disability adversely impacts the ability to benefit from general education to learn and participate in school. IDEA was initiated in 1975 as P.L.94-142 and reauthorized based on input from families, professionals, and court rulings. Table 1 summarizes the evolution of federal policies for students with disabilities, from ensuring access to schools to focusing on quality educational services and experiences.

² Rose, R. & Shevlin, M. (2017). A sense of belonging: Children's views of acceptance in "inclusive" mainstream schools. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, Special Issue pp 65–80.

Table 1: Disability-Related Mandates & Policies

<p>Civil Rights for People with Disabilities</p>	<p>1964 Civil Rights</p> <p>1971 PARC (court ruling), “uneducable” or “untrainable” students cannot be excluded from public education.</p> <p>1973 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act</p> <p>1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142)</p> <p>1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)</p> <p>1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</p> <p>1997 Reauthorization of IDEA</p> <p>2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB)</p> <p>2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEIA)</p> <p>2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)</p> <p>2017 Endrew vs. Douglas County (more than de minimis and reasonable progress in light of the student’s unique circumstances)</p>
<p>Principles of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</p>	<p>Zero Reject - Locate, identify, & provide services to all eligible students with disabilities</p> <p>Protection in Evaluation - Schools must conduct nondiscriminatory assessments to determine if a student has an IDEA related disability</p> <p>Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) - Schools must develop and deliver an individualized education program of special education services that confers meaningful educational benefit.</p> <p>Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - Students with disabilities must be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate.</p> <p>Procedural Safeguards - Schools must comply with the procedural requirements of the IDEA.</p> <p>Parental Participation - Schools must collaborate with families in the development and delivery of their child’s special education program.</p>

A basic education is an evolving program of instruction that is intended to provide all students with the opportunity to become responsible and respectful global citizens, to contribute to their economic well-being and that of their families and communities, to explore and understand different perspectives, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives.³ IDEA guarantees students with disabilities the right to FAPE, to include the curriculum and experiences of a basic education that is provided to students without a disability.

Historically, a separate and parallel system of education and services has been practiced in schools, which has resulted in limited participation of students with disabilities in basic general education curriculum, classrooms, and school community. Special education has been a room at the end of the hall or in a portable building away from general education students and disconnected from the general school community. Research-based instructional methods have traditionally been provided

³ Revised Code of Washington (RCW) [28A.150.210](#)

in small groups and one-on-one in special education classrooms to remediate or accelerate learning. However, numerous studies since the 1970s have concluded that separate education in a separate setting for students with disabilities has not only led to minimal academic gains,⁴ but also negative effects on social and academic outcomes.⁵ There is now ample research on the benefits of inclusion for students with and without disabilities to support systemwide change (Table 2).

Table 2: Benefits of Inclusion

Research on the Benefits of Inclusion
<p>Improved communication and social skills.</p> <p>Beukelman, D. R., & Mirenda, P. (2013). Augmentative and alternative communication: Supporting children and adults with complex communication needs. Brookes.</p> <p>McSheehan, M., Sonnenmeier, R. M., & Jorgensen, C. M. (2009). Membership, participation, and learning in general education classrooms for students with autism spectrum disorders who use AAC. <i>Autism spectrum disorders and AAC</i>, 413–442.</p>
<p>Higher expectations for student learning.</p> <p>Jorgensen, C. M., McSheehan, M., & Sonnenmeier, R. (2007). Presumed competence reflected in the educational programs of students with IDD before and after the Beyond Access professional development intervention. <i>Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities</i>, 32(4), 248–262.</p>
<p>Higher attendance rates.</p> <p>Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pull-out programs. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 68(2), 203–222.</p>
<p>Functioning at higher level than in segregated classrooms.</p> <p>Keefe, E. B., & Moore, V. (2004). The challenge of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms at the high school level: What the teachers told us. <i>American Secondary Education</i>, 32(3), 77–88.</p>
<p>Increased engagement in school.</p> <p>Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., & Doering, K. (2003). Collaborative teaming to support students at risk and students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 69(3), 315–32.</p>
<p>Improved performance on state tests.</p> <p>Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pull-out programs. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 68(2), 203–222.</p>
<p>Increased academic productivity and initiation with peers.</p> <p>Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., & Doering, K. (2003). Collaborative teaming to support students at risk and students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 69(3), 315–32.</p>
<p>Improved adult outcomes for postsecondary education, employment, and independence.</p> <p>White J. & Weiner J. S. (2004). Influence of least restrictive environment and community-based training on integrated employment outcomes for transitioning students with severe disabilities. <i>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation</i>, (21), 149–156.</p>

The movement to improve inclusion practices in general education classrooms and school communities for students with disabilities has grown steadily since the Regular Education Initiative of 1986.⁶ Over the years, committed educators, schools and districts across the country have adopted inclusive missions and practices for special education, but real change must involve examining the systems of education to recognize barriers for students with disabilities, and barriers

⁴ Schiller, E., Sanford, C., & Blackorby, S. (2008). *A national profile of the classroom experiences and academic performance of students with learning disabilities: A special topic report from the special education elementary longitudinal study.*

⁵ Causton, J., & Theoharis, G. (2014). How do schools become effective and inclusive? In J. McLeskey, N. L. Waldron, F. Spooner, & B. Algozzine (Eds.), *Handbook of effective inclusive schools* (p. 30–42). New York, London: Routledge.

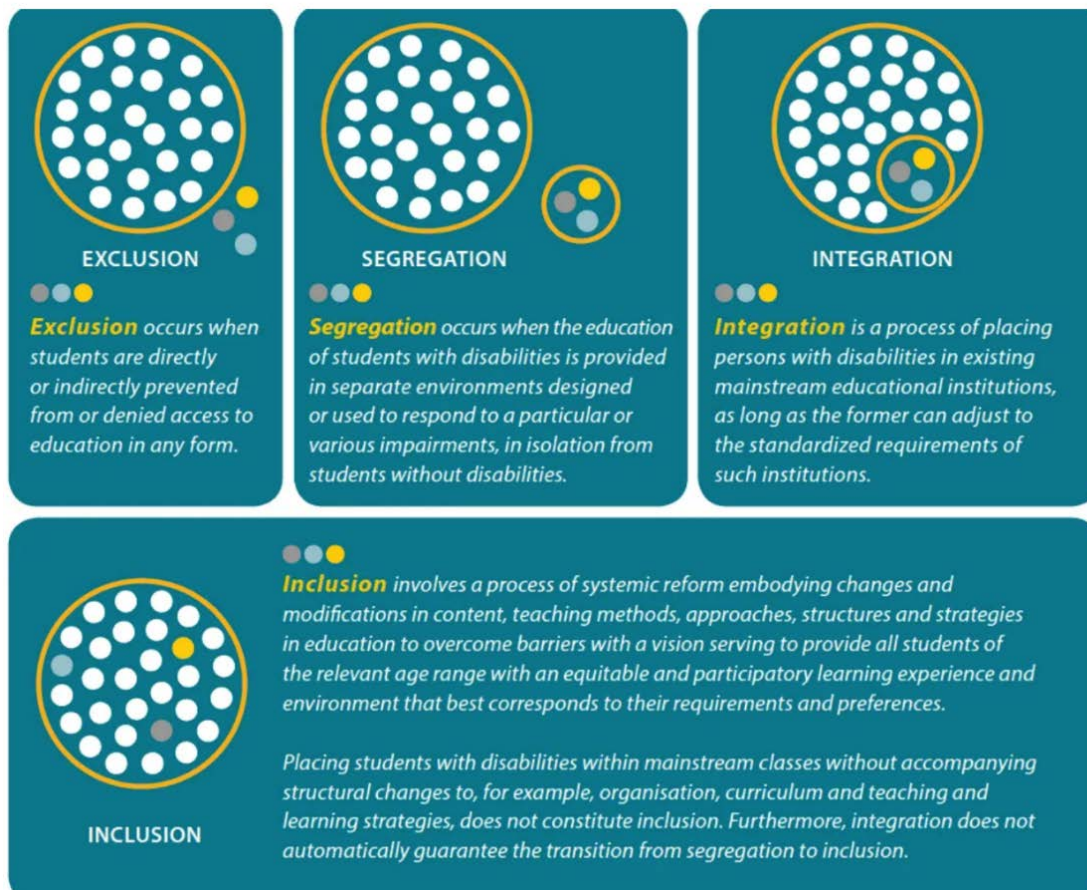
⁶ Will, M. (1986). Educating children with learning problems: A shared responsibility. *Exceptional Children*, 52(5), 411–415.

to school change. Schools and educators need to adapt systems in education to build on what is known about learning, and needed for teaching diverse students, including students with disabilities. Initiatives for inclusion must transcend general and special education silos, entrust bold leadership, apply innovative instructional strategies, engage families, and leverage related services.

Inclusion Defined

Educational environments for students with disabilities range from complete exclusion from the general school community and classrooms to equal participation as inclusion in all aspects of the education system.⁷ Figure 3 illustrates the educational experiences of students with disabilities.

Figure 3: Types of Educational Access⁸



Inclusion means all students, including students with disabilities, experience meaningful participation in general education settings, both academically and socially. It is when all students are presumed competent, are welcomed as valued members of all general education classrooms, school community, and extra-curricular activities alongside their same age peers, and experience reciprocal social relationships.⁹

Inclusion is realized when all students, regardless of their special education needs, are provided targeted interventions and accommodations, allowing them to learn in the general education

⁷ Hehir, T. (2016). *A Summary of Evidence on Inclusive Education*. Abt Associates.

⁸ United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *General Comment No. 4*.

⁹ TASH, n.d. para. 1 *TASH - Inclusive Education*.

classroom and engage the core curriculum. Inclusion is described by Villa and Thousand¹⁰ as both a vision and a practice. Udvari-Solner¹¹ describes full inclusion as “a value-based practice that attempts to bring students, including those with disabilities into full membership within their local school community” (p.101). School teams need a shared understanding of what inclusion means, how it is implemented, and what role each member plays in making it successful.

Inclusionary practices are actions that educators, schools, and districts take to create opportunities for students with diverse abilities to learn and be a part of the general education curriculum, classroom, and school community. These actions are grounded in a belief in growth mindsets, a focus on strengths rather than deficits, and principles of equity. Inclusionary practices depend upon a commitment of resources, time, and materials to address individualized education goals in general education classrooms to the maximum extent possible for social, academic, and functional gains. The inclusion of students with disabilities must be a shared initiative based upon a shared vision and actions that create opportunities for a meaningful education for students with disabilities. Teamwork between educators, administrators, and families is essential for full implementation of inclusion.

What Inclusion is:

- **Inclusive Vision and Practice:** a shared belief that everyone belongs, regardless of perceived ability or disability.
- **Growth Mindset:** The belief that everyone can learn and benefit from increased expectations of general education standards.
- **Supported by Research:** Students with disabilities included in general education develop self-determination and acquire greater social and academic gains.
- **Presumed Competence:** Understanding that students learn best when they feel valued, and educators hold the highest expectations while creating meaningful curriculum opportunities in social, academic, and functional development across environments.
- **Practice of Differentiation and Universal Design for Learning:** The provision of equitable access in the least restrictive environment to minimize the need for specially designed instruction through removing barriers and providing options for individual learners.

What Inclusion is not:

- **Traditional school practices:** The shared belief that students who have needs outside of the norm receive specialized instruction in a separate setting within the school building. An expectation that students be ‘ready to learn’, and able to do the same work as students without disabilities to be placed in general education.
- **Fixed mindset:** The belief that student behaviors and the capacity to learn is limited and cannot be changed.
- **Integration:** Arranged time spent with peers without disabilities (recess, lunch) with low expectations of students with disabilities.
- **Mainstreaming:** Selective placement in general education class settings (art, PE, music) with minimal planning, goals, and supports.
- **Unidimensional Instructional Strategies:** Instruction and environmental arrangements designed for an illusory average student with narrow learning objectives, standardized expectations, and little flexibility.

¹⁰ Villa, R & Thousand, J. (2016) *The inclusive education checklist: A self-assessment of best practices*. Naples, FL: National Professional Resources.

¹¹ Udvari-Solner, A. (1996). Theoretical influences on the establishment of inclusive practices. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26(1), 101–120.

Rights-Based Perspectives on Inclusion

Implementing inclusion is very much about improving academic outcomes for all students, but it is also a matter of individual rights, because all students are entitled to meaningful participation in a general education classroom community. Because decisions around the placement of students with disabilities have consequences related to a person's sense of marginalization and access to educational opportunities, rights and ethics discourse state that the existence of a parallel education system prevents the delivery of an education that adequately responds to the increasing diversity of student populations. The responsibility to implement inclusionary practices in schools is clearly outlined in state and national policy, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Policies Related to Inclusion

Individuals with Disability Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)	
Sec. 300.114 LRE requirements About IDEA	(2) Each public agency must ensure that— (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (P.L. 114-95)	
ESSA	ESSA requires that students with disabilities be involved and make progress in the same general education curriculum that is taught to students without disabilities.
Washington Administrative Code (WAC)	
WAC 392-172A-02050 Least restrictive environment WAC 392-172A-02050 Least restrictive environment	Subject to the exceptions for students in adult correctional facilities, school districts shall ensure that the provision of services to each student eligible for special education, including preschool students and students in public or private institutions or other care facilities, shall be provided: (1) To the maximum extent appropriate in the general education environment with students who are nondisabled; and (2) Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of students eligible for special education from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Special Education and Least Restrictive Environment

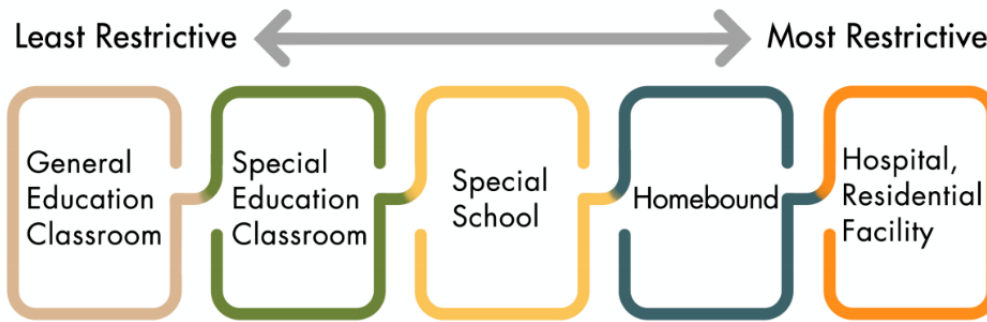
Special education as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a service provided to students who meet eligibility criteria in at least one of thirteen categories of disability. The services provided include specially designed instruction, adaptations, related services, supplemental services, transportation, transition services, and protection from discrimination.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is one of the six guiding principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which guarantees FAPE with nondisabled students to the greatest extent possible, which is interpreted as inclusion in general education. LRE is determined on a case-by-case basis by a multi-disciplinary team including the family as part of the IEP process. If a student's IEP cannot be implemented satisfactorily in the general education environment with the provision of supplementary aids and services, then a continuum of environments and arrangements must be considered as increasingly restrictive from the general education classroom.

To ensure an appropriate education for all students with disabilities, IDEA mandates schools and districts provide a continuum of placement options beginning with full participation with nondisabled peers in general education setting with supplemental service (LRE). Figure 4 below illustrates how special educational services can include the general education setting with in-class support, resource center pull-out, partial or full special education class, and in-school or out-of-district placements, depending on student needs as identified in their IEPs.

IDEA states that special education is not a place based where students go to receive services based on disability categories, such as a self-contained classroom, but rather, special education services are to follow students as determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Figure 4: Continuum of Placements¹²



The goal of special education is to provide FAPE, and to always work toward and ensure progress toward general education standards, curriculum, and environments. Students in across settings will need collaboration among educators to access to the general curriculum, meaningful participation in general education classrooms, and effective instruction in grade-level content standards.

Deconstructing Disability

Disability is a complex phenomenon reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body

¹² IRIS Center – LRE Information Brief.

and features of society in which he or she lives.¹³ When city planners, architects, stores, transportation, and ableism occurs when design in schools and society education neglect to consider the needs of people with disabilities. [The Center for Disability Rights](#) describes ableism as the beliefs or practices that devalue or discriminate against people with disabilities based on the assumption that people with disabilities need to change or be fixed, thereby neglecting the responsibility to adapt or design for various abilities.¹⁴ Most standards of all kinds in society and schools conform to the way non-disabled people do, think, and live. Expectations narrowly focused on able-bodied and able-minded standards, as well as misconceptions of disability, contributes to experiences of marginalization, discrimination, low expectations, and inequity for individuals with disabilities.

The Office of Civil Rights enforces legislation that protects against discrimination, but a concerted effort is needed in schools and society to create a more inclusive and equitable life for people with disabilities. Awareness and understanding of disability (Table 4) come from examining perceptions and misconceptions, and learning about real challenges faced by those who experience disabilities.

Table 4: Components of Disability Awareness¹⁵

Disability Awareness
Socially constructed - What we believe about disability, and how we respond to disability, is influenced by our personal experiences, cultural perspectives, and attitudes passed down through generations.
Hidden vs. visible - A disability can be physically apparent, but many learning disabilities are not easily identified.
Context specific - Disability is relative to contexts and expectations.
Natural part of being human - Disability is something everyone experiences to some extent over the course of a lifetime.
Person first - Disability does not define a person and should not be the primary description of a person.
Marginalized and discriminated in schools and society - Education systems and environments inadvertently perpetuate ableism and discrimination.

The design and structure of school systems are historically and culturally bound. Intersections of disability and race, poverty, gender, and language difference further compound both the marginalization and oppression of students with disabilities in schools. Students of color have long been overrepresented in special education, resulting in educational needs not being met. A significant shift in thinking and practice must occur so educators can move from a traditional model of separate general and special education systems to a more collective and collaborative mission that recognizes and values the benefits of inclusion for everyone.

¹³ [World Health Organization](#).

¹⁴ [The Center for Disability Rights: Ableism](#).

¹⁵ Adapted from Lennard, D.J. (2010). *The Disability Studies Reader*. (3rd Ed). Routledge. NY.

Addressing Barriers and Shifting Mindsets

Access to learning means that all students, including students with disabilities, have equal opportunity to general education settings, curriculum, academic support, and resources to reach their potential and achieve education standards. Students with disabilities have traditionally been educated in separate settings based on the belief that unique and individual needs must be addressed by special education teachers and staff who have specific skills and knowledge for educating students with disabilities.¹⁶ Traditionally, general and special education teachers have been prepared for separate tracks of education, and not prepared for inclusion and collaboration in schools.¹⁷ However, the success of students with disabilities depends on the skills and expertise of both general and special educators. Separate systems of education and a lack of experience with inclusion can perpetuate mindsets that become a barrier to inclusion.

Mindsets are ways of seeing the world that can be either rigid and fixed, or open and flexible to new ideas and possibilities. When traditional practices and policies in schools related to students with disabilities are rigid or fixed, there is tendency to resist change, and to conserve what is traditional, rather than explore new ways of teaching. Doubts about how or if a student with low cognition and processing skills or limited communication skills can benefit from the general education curriculum and classrooms can have negative impacts on outcomes. A strengths-based focus, and a presumption of competence, are mindsets necessary for students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the general education curriculum and community with appropriate tools to learn and communicate alongside students without disabilities.

Inclusive Mindsets:

- All students have a right to be educated and socialized with their peers.
- All educators support all students in becoming an integral part of society.
- All individuals have something to learn and something to offer.
- Students and teachers have a right to connect and belong with the broader community.
- Students with disabilities and their families experience a sense of belonging in the school community.

Traditional Mindsets:

- General education teachers are meant to educate the “average” students.
- Students who have needs outside of the norm should receive specialized instruction in a separate setting.
- Specialists are the only ones who know what to do with students who are different.
- Perspective that disability is a “problem within the child”.
- Families perceive students with disabilities need a separate class and specialists to catch up and get ready to be included.

Efforts to increase access and create a more equitable system of education for students with disabilities requires proactive approaches to removing barriers and shifting to growth mindsets. Shifting mindsets and practices to be more inclusive requires time to reflect, strategies for teaching diverse students, commitment to collaboration, and administrative support. The following are

¹⁶ Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Thousand, J. (2003). What do special educators need to know and be prepared to do for inclusive schooling to work? *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 26(1), 42–50.

¹⁷Blanton, L. P., McLeskey, J. M., & Hernandez Taylor, K. (2014). *Examining indicators of teacher education program quality: Intersections between general and special education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

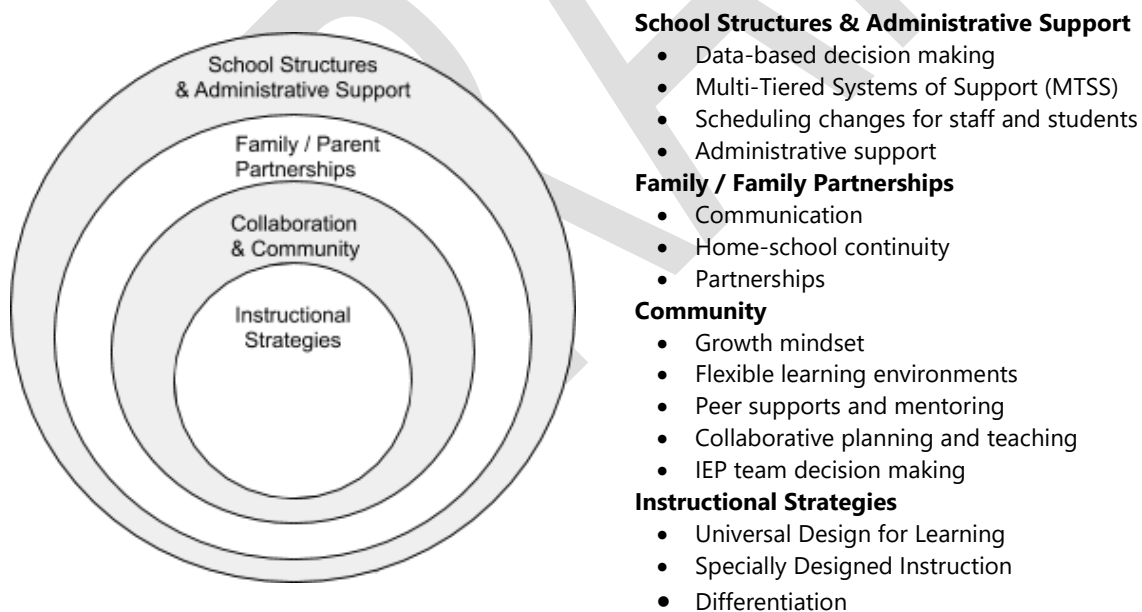
recommendations for identifying and removing barriers for students with disabilities to learn and participate in the least restrictive environment:

- Examine expectations within our own mindsets, school environments and standards-based curriculum that are both implied and explicit.
- Examine materials and learning goals that could be adapted or modified.
- Identify barriers based on individual student needs in relation to expectations and materials. (All students do not experience the same barriers).
- Communicate expectations and perceived barriers to promote awareness and self-determination.
- Consider ways to adapt expectations, materials, and learning or social goals.
- Repeat, share, and reflect on successes and positive impact on students.

Systems Change

The principles behind the inclusion of students with disabilities are inherently about justice, equity, and opportunity. For inclusion to be successful, program quality must be high and support services must be properly planned.¹⁸ Successful inclusion is good for all students, and effective teaching is effective intervention for all students.¹⁹ Figure 5 identifies the multiple and overlapping systems that support inclusion; each has specific roles to play and reliance upon the others.

Figure 5: Overlapping Systems of Support for Inclusion



¹⁸Oh-Young, C., & Filler, J. (2015). A meta-analysis of the effects of placement on academic and social skill outcome measures of students with disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 47*, 80–92.

¹⁹ Jordan, A., & Stanovich, P. (2003). Teachers' personal epistemological beliefs about students with disabilities as indicators of effective teaching practices. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs, 3*(1), 1–12.

Activity: Inclusionary Practices Self-Assessment²⁰

Washington state has identified six principles to guide districts in assessing inclusionary practices in schools and districts. Please reflect on the questions related to the six principles and consider ways individual educators, administrators, and districts might change current practices to increase successful inclusion in the Least Restrictive Environment.

1) Vision, Expectations, leadership, and climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How has your school and district communicated a vision and priorities for inclusionary practices?</i>• <i>In what ways is your school and district exploring how to implement inclusionary practices?</i>• <i>To what extent is there alignment for inclusionary practices throughout the system?</i>• <i>To what extent are accessibility and UDL considered when planning instruction, communicating with staff and families, and discussing resources?</i>
2) Policies and procedures reflect requirements of State and Federal Law
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How is your school and district participating in state opportunities for increasing inclusionary practices and engaging in system wide change?</i>• <i>How are Board policies and procedures supportive of inclusionary practices, and are bargaining agreements aligned?</i>
3) An array of services and program/classroom strategies to facilitate the implementation of LRE for students with disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Are general educators in your school(s) committed to instructional planning that meets the needs of diverse learners?</i>• <i>How clear is the process in your school for making LRE decisions based on the needs and capabilities of individual students with disabilities?</i>• <i>To what extent is the LRE decision process considering student well-being, social-emotional development, academic achievement, and post-school success?</i>
4) District accountability systems that reflect high expectations for all students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How does your school and/or district ensure all understand how to plan and implement adaptations and accommodations for participation in state testing?</i>• <i>How is your team ensuring IEP goals and objectives are aligned with state standards?</i>
5) Teachers, families, & students working together for better student results
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To what extent is there collaboration in your school between general and special educators, administrators, related service personnel, and families to plan for inclusion?</i>• <i>In what ways might your school plan to increase collaboration for the success of inclusion?</i>
6) Sufficient numbers of qualified staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How has your school planned for flexible staffing, schedules, and support for inclusion?</i>• <i>To what extent are special and general education teachers able to collaborate on teaching content standards, assessment, and support for inclusion?</i>• <i>How does your school team identify and plan for efficient use of resources to support inclusion such as technology for teaching, assistive technology, paraprofessionals, adapted learning materials, etc.</i>

²⁰ Adapted from WestEd. (2005). [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) Self-Assessment Tool](#).

Activity: Inclusive Video

Review the two links below, then consider personal, professional, and school goals or next steps for inclusionary practices:

- Watch the [Including Samuel](#) extended trailer (12:03) by Dan Habib.
- Watch [Evolution of Inclusion](#) (5:02) by Shelley Moore.

DRAFT

SECTION 1: AN INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

An Instructional Guide for Educators is the first of four sections in the Inclusionary Practices Handbook for Washington state. This section will provide an overview of best practices and practical examples of how teachers can work together to meet the needs of diverse students. The section is divided into three chapters. The following are topics for the three chapters in Section one: 1) Collaborative Practices that Support Inclusion, 2) Inclusive Learning Environments, and 3) Instructional Strategies for Inclusive Settings.

Chapter 1. Collaborative Practices that Support Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a schoolwide culture of collaboration • Inclusive mindsets and beliefs for meaningful collaboration • Roles and responsibilities • Collaboration and communication skills • Strategies for collaborative teaming and co-teaching • Culturally responsive collaboration • Collaboration across grade levels and learning environments
Chapter 2. Inclusive Learning Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Equity for Students with Disabilities • Universal Design • Community and Family Centered • Learner Centered and Flexible • Social and Emotional Learning and Behavioral Supports • Standards and Assessment Alignment • Adaptations: Accommodations and Modifications • Technology Enhanced Environments • Integrated Assistive Technology
Chapter 3. Instructional Strategies for Inclusive Settings	<p>Currently in development; anticipated publication in spring 2021</p>

The content in the handbook was developed using a thorough review of academic research and literature related to inclusion. This handbook is also informed by the wisdom and experience of knowledgeable professionals and educators dedicated to inclusionary practices in Washington state and beyond.

Each chapter of section one suggests strategies and practices that general and special education teachers can use, in collaboration with other educators, to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and school communities. Within each chapter are activities for discussion, reflection, and self-assessment of teaching practices. Appendices will correspond with each chapter, and are labeled accordingly (e.g. 1-A, 1-B and 2-A, 2-B, etc.).

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CHAPTER 1: COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT INCLUSION

The act of collaboration involves coming together, working together, and sustaining relationships. The word “collaboration” includes the smaller word, “labor”. Collaboration is laboring over a problem or task together in order to affect an outcome. It is based on the belief that working together is more effective than accomplishing a task alone. Collaboration is essential for successful inclusion in schools, and a hallmark of inclusionary practices.

Collaboration in schools is “when teachers work together to diagnose what they need to do, plan and teach interventions, and evaluate their effectiveness.”²¹ [High Leverage Practices](#) (HLP) outlines three primary reasons educators collaborate in schools to include: 1) increase student success, 2) organize and facilitate effective meetings, and 3) work with families. There are many barriers to collaboration in schools, including school structures and educator mindsets. General and special education teachers have historically operated in a two-track system where beliefs and practices in education follow different paradigms, a different research base, epistemology, and perceived responsibilities. A collaborative and unified school culture focused on inclusion requires that educators reimagine disability as natural, examine school norms and beliefs to reduce barriers to collaboration, and work together to create conditions for all learners to be successful in the general education classroom and school community. Successful inclusion depends upon the following:

- Collaborative practices that are schoolwide.
- Inclusive mindsets and beliefs in the collaboration process.
- Roles and responsibilities refined and sometimes redefined.
- Educators have opportunities to develop communication and collaboration skills.
- Collaborative teaming and co-teaching must be strategic.
- Collaboration must be culturally responsive.
- Collaboration must occur across grade levels and learning environments.

Case Study: Inclusion for Billy

Billy is a student with disabilities who did not spend his school years in a self-contained classroom, despite the recommendation of the IEP team. At the start of second grade, his communication, social, and academic skills were significantly behind other students his age. His parents were asked to consider a self-contained classroom that would have been a 30-minute bus ride from home. The general education teacher reported not having the skills to teach Billy in her classroom, and the special education teacher said she did not have the time to support inclusion. His parents were adamant he needed to be in the enriched environment of the general education classroom. They knew he would be most motivated to learn and grow when part of a dynamic curriculum, typical social and language models, and routines within the school community.

Advocacy for Billy resulted in him being included in general education classrooms more than 80% of the day every year from second grade until high school. Billy became a member of every

²¹ Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center. (2014). [High Leverage Practices](#).

classroom and the school community in a way not possible had his education been in a self-contained classroom. His parents advocated for the opportunity for Billy to be included, but his success in school depended upon collaboration between IEP team members, teachers, paraeducators, the district, and the family.

Schoolwide Collaborative Practices

Billy's story illustrates how traditional school models can pose a barrier to access and success in the least restrictive environment. Billy's family wanted their son included in general education to the greatest extent possible with support, but the school and district were designed to teach students with disabilities in a separate classroom, and in different ways. The educators and district lacked a shared vision for making inclusion possible but, at the end of each school year, teachers were surprised to report a positive experience with inclusion, and they developed new skills for inclusive teaching and collaboration.

A schoolwide culture of collaboration means all educators, administrators, and families work together effectively to ensure every student experiences success and belonging in the school community, and inclusion is not just dependent upon the willingness of individual teachers. In a schoolwide culture of collaboration, all teachers are involved with inclusion, sharing resources, reaching out to one another for consultation, sharing expertise and ideas, and working together with families to support the needs of diverse students. School leaders play an essential role in building a collaborative culture by inviting educators to examine traditional practices and beliefs that might be barriers to collaboration and designing structures that support collaborative practices. This work is essential within schools but must also be endorsed and supported throughout the broader system of leadership across districts.

Schoolwide systems for inclusion depend upon an ethos of equity, belonging, and quality education for all.²² Collaboration is essential for implementing schoolwide systems of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ongoing professional development, schoolwide schedules, and Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). UDL can be integrated with high leverage practices (HLPs), and specially designed instruction (SDI) for including students with disabilities in every general education classroom. MTSS utilizes collaborative teams to provide a continuum of academic and behavioral support for all students. Table 1-1 identifies elements of both the culture and systems necessary for successful collaboration.

²² Jung, L. A., Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Kroener, J. (2019). *Your students, my students, our students: Rethinking equitable and inclusive classrooms*. ASCD.

Table 1-1: Collaboration Across System Levels²³

Schoolwide Culture of Collaboration	Schoolwide Systems of Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared vision that all students belong.• Shared goals for inclusion.• Shared responsibility for student success.• Schools and classrooms welcoming to all families.• Professional learning communities (PLCs) for educators.• Celebrations of student achievement.• Person-first language.• Showcasing successful collaboration and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integration of UDL and SDI.• Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).• Schoolwide schedules for MTSS, collaboration, and co-teaching.• Cross disciplinary professional development.• School leadership committee for inclusion.• Community and family engagement.• Dedicated resources for collaboration.• Monitoring of schoolwide systems of collaboration.

Mindsets and Beliefs that Support Collaboration

Mindsets conducive to collaboration are open to possibilities, respectful and tolerant of different approaches, and willing to participate in the process of reflection and change. Collaboration can be difficult when different beliefs and unchecked bias become barriers. In the story of Billy, the second grade general education teacher believed that Billy did not belong in the general education classroom and needed specialized help with learning that she was not able to provide. The special education teacher and other members of the IEP team concurred that the self-contained classroom was designed for students like Billy who were significantly behind in academic and social skills, and that mainstreaming opportunities would be sufficient for social integration. His parents persisted and resolving the problem required consideration of all perspectives regarding what was best for Billy, discussions about what was possible, and an examination of bias toward separating students with disabilities at a personal and professional level.

Historically, in traditional school models, students receiving special education services have been viewed as needing to 'fit in' or 'earn their way' into general education classes. This perspective reflects bias toward students with disabilities and can be a barrier to collaboration and inclusion. Bias refers to stereotypes, assumptions, and prejudices that develop over time and can unconsciously influence discriminatory actions and decision making.²⁴ Everyone has implicit unconscious bias about people and life, and bias does not always align with personal beliefs. Teachers may care deeply about students with disabilities and believe they deserve a quality education, and at the same time have bias that students with cognitive disabilities don't belong in general education based on assumptions the student would not benefit from general education.

²³ Jung, L. A., Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Kroener, J. (2019). *Your students, my students, our students: Rethinking equitable and inclusive classrooms*. ASCD.

²⁴ Kalyanpur, M. & Harry, B. (1999). *The culture of special education: Building reciprocal family-professional relationships*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Actions that result from bias may include disability-based placement in a separate classroom, supplanting instead of adapting lessons, ignoring a student with disabilities in class discussions, lowering expectations, or assuming a student with disabilities won't be accepted by nondisabled peers. Such actions based on bias have deprived students with disabilities for decades of enriched content, language models, and social experiences that occur every day in general education classrooms. Educators are in positions to make critical decisions affecting the lives of students, and the impact of bias can be reduced through reflection and self-awareness.

Activity: Self-Assessment of Beliefs About Inclusion

Read the belief statements below about inclusion and match your beliefs with the ratings, then reflect on your responses. Consider how your responses might reflect lived experiences or bias, and how differing viewpoints among team members might impact collaboration.

Instructions:	
For each belief statement, choose one of the following ratings that corresponds with your position. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. I agree with this statement. B. It depends on the commitment of educator(s). C. It depends on student needs and student readiness. D. Maybe with system changes. E. I don't believe this and/or I have doubts. 	
Belief Statements about Inclusion:	My Rating:
The academic needs of students with disabilities can be met in general education classrooms.	
General education teachers can meet the unique needs of students with disabilities when given information and support.	
General and special education teachers need to share responsibility for educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms.	
Special education teachers provide valuable input and strategies for meeting the needs of students in general education classrooms.	
Personal Reflection:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What experiences might have influenced your responses?</i> • <i>Can you recognize bias in your responses and possible actions that might result from bias?</i> • <i>How might opposing viewpoints among team members be a challenge for collaboration?</i> 	

An inclusive mindset might agree with the statements above or believe the statements depend on the commitment of educators. Conditional beliefs in the statements based upon disabilities or system limitations may reflect bias, which can lead to dismissal or deferral of change. It is understandable that some educators and families would have reservations or concerns about inclusion based on experiences or beliefs. While differences of opinion are natural, opposing beliefs and bias can be barriers to collaboration if not addressed individually and as part of the teaming process. A schoolwide culture of collaboration and vision for inclusion can help teams transcend

mental model barriers and bias to promote understanding and consensus building.

At the core of collaborative work, educators must ask, “how can we ensure each student with a disability has equitable access to the school community, curriculum, and activities as students without disabilities”? Effective collaboration depends upon positive mindsets, a shared vision, redefined roles (see [Appendix 1-A](#)), and school restructuring. In addition, working with colleagues and families also requires strong interpersonal skills, trust, courage, openness, communication skills, and knowledge of strategies. Cook (2002)²⁵ identifies characteristics of effective collaborators for inclusion:

1. Recognizing that inclusion is complex and requires joint and sustained effort.
2. Acknowledging the creativity generated by working collaboratively.
3. Combining the effectiveness of teachers skilled in content and curriculum with skills in adaptations and special education processes.
4. Participating willingly in joint problem solving and welcoming the personal and professional support of colleagues.
5. Recognizing and valuing the personal learning and growth that results from collaboration.
6. Reflecting on own educational practices and looking for ways to be more effective in teaching and collaboration.

Inclusive Language

Inclusive language reflects the belief that disability is natural, and that different abilities and ways of doing things is respected. The language used to talk about students with disabilities not only reflects a mindset but influences perceptions of disability and the role of educators. When educators refer to students as “yours” or “mine”, “sped students”, “those kids”, or “tier 3 students”, it reflects predetermined expectations, otherness from “regular” students, and division of responsibility among educators based on student disability. If a teacher comments that a student won’t listen, the problem appears to be with the student for not following directions instead of adults taking responsibility to modify their actions to improve understanding. Patterns of language reflect mindsets toward disability and require conscious effort, reflection, and teamwork to change.

All people are unique in different ways, and disability is only one aspect of identity. The use of person-first language acknowledges that every student is more than what might be assumed by their disability. By choosing inclusive language and acting to reduce barriers in systems and environments to include the diverse needs of all students, schools and society can also minimize the impact of disability on individuals. Rather than perceiving the challenges of disability as residing in the student, educators should consider how the environment or expectations can be adapted or better communicated to improve understanding and clarify expectations. In addition, educators can use language that brings students with disabilities into the community, referring to them as “our students” or by their names. Also, when describing what students can’t do, use language that reflects a growth mindset such as ‘working on it’ or ‘not yet demonstrated’ to reflect

²⁵ Cook, B. G. (2002). Inclusive teachers’ attitudes toward their students with disabilities: A replication and extension. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(4), 307–320.

a belief that students can learn and follow expectations given time and opportunities.²⁶

Culturally Responsive Collaboration

School culture is central to how learning takes place.²⁷ The culture is reflected in everyday habits, practices, and interactions, and develops from shared meanings and beliefs. It is greatly influenced by the dominant culture in society, uniform standards, and systems of accountability. Culturally responsive collaboration in teams helps to maintain parity when collaborating with diverse colleagues and families. Parity is acknowledging that each member of a team has value and can make equally meaningful contributions.

Cultural responsiveness in a team means members recognize and respect different styles and norms of communication and social behaviors. Teams must work empathetically to ensure members have voice, a sense of belonging, and opportunities to be agents of change. Anchoring discussions and decisions in an understanding of justice and equity helps to expand possibilities for all students, and keeps teams focused on shared goals and outcomes.

Collaboration for inclusionary practices is justice oriented, student centered, and culturally responsive. A social justice-oriented approach in schools reflects an overarching commitment to equity and makes concerted efforts to recognize how rules, norms, and values can privilege some and exclude others.

The following are steps for culturally responsive teaching and teamwork based on the work of Geneva Gay (2002)²⁸:

- Develop a knowledge base on cultural diversity by exploring alternate perspectives on education, rules, socialization, discipline, etc.
- Ensure curriculum, intervention plans, and instructional decisions are culturally relevant and do not disempower others or reinforce stereotypes.
- Demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community.
- Maintain cross-cultural communications.
- Consider modifying instructional strategies or curriculum for cultural relevance.

IEP Teaming: Roles & Responsibilities

Eligibility for special education means a student has been evaluated and determined to need special education services to access general education because of a disability in one of thirteen eligibility categories.²⁹ Disability categories are necessary for receiving special education services but are insufficient for understanding who a student is and what they need to succeed in school. The use of disability labels can lead to assumptions and stereotypes based on characteristics associated with different disability categories and limit perceptions of what students are capable of achieving. Labels and categories for eligibility should not be used to predetermine student needs, design services, or determine placement. Decisions about how and where to support students with

²⁶ Yeager, D. & Dweck, C. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302–314.

²⁷ Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (2nd ed.)*. Teachers College.

²⁸ Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116.

²⁹ WAC [392-172A-01035](#)

disabilities should be based upon a comprehensive review of information about strengths, skills, needs, and preferences of the student from various sources, including the family, as well as observations in natural environments.

Collaboration between educators and families is fundamental in the provision of rights for students with disabilities. IDEA mandates students with disabilities have access to the same general education curriculum and assessments as students without disabilities in the least restrictive environment to the greatest extent possible. In addition, IDEA mandates that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities be developed by a team to include a special education teacher, a general education teacher, related service providers as needed, a district representative, the family, and the student, when appropriate. There are multiple other partners who could contribute to the IEP including outside agencies, community-based organizations, and family advocates. The IEP outlines the strengths, skills, needs, and preferences of individual students based on information provided by members of the team. Figure 1-1 illustrates how that information is used to develop IEP goals, services, supplementary aids, accommodations, and placement(s).

Figure 1-1: IEP Development Process

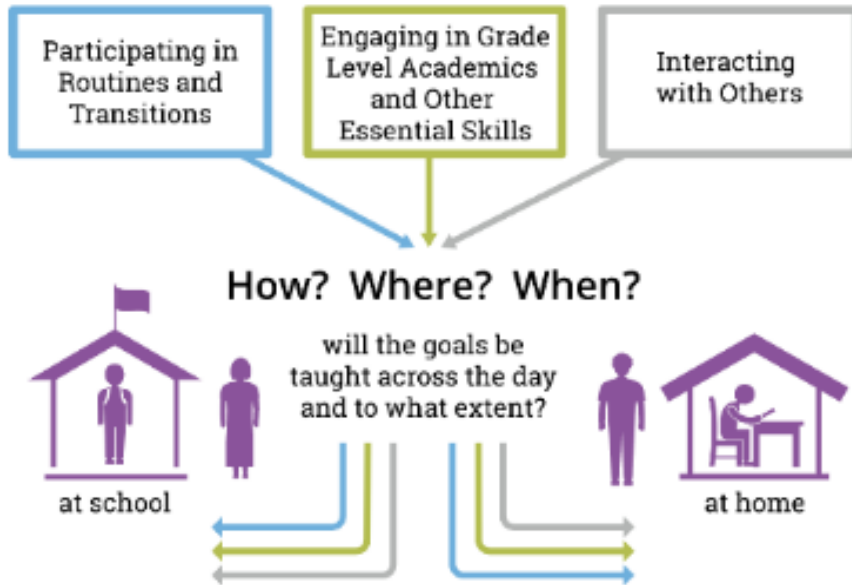


The special education case manager coordinates and facilitates IEP team meetings and ensures team members have opportunities to provide input. IEP decisions are made collaboratively at each step in the process. Students with disabilities are general education students first, and they need access to general education standards and curriculum. Therefore, general education teachers play an essential role in the IEP planning and development of standards-based goals, but also in facilitating inclusion and determining IEP accommodations for general education settings.

Families play an essential role in providing information and advocating for the rights and needs of their child. When educators and families commit to sharing responsibility for student success, there is continuity between school and home that is focused on student strengths and presumptions of competence in the student's ability to learn and grow. The [5C Process](#), developed by TIES Center at the University of Minnesota, is a tool for IEP teams to build continuity and application of IEP goals across home and school learning environments. The 5C Process includes recognizing:

- 1) Components in a framework,
- 2) Collaboration (see Figure 1-2),
- 3) Continuity,
- 4) Data collection, and
- 5) Capacity.

Figure 1-2: Collaboration as Part of the 5C Process³⁰



Consider the following strategies for ensuring team members feel valued and engaged in the IEP process:

- Always start meetings with greetings, introductions, and a statement of purpose.
- Create an agenda and allow time for others to add items to the agenda.
- Describe the function of the IEP as a working document, and how it benefits the student.
- Use plain language and pause to allow for input, and to check for understanding of terms and discussion points.
- Focus on student strengths, interests, and goals.
- Provide opportunities for students to participate or lead a portion of the IEP whenever possible.
- Provide a draft of the IEP to families whenever possible before the meetings to support family engagement and understanding.
- Encourage the family and student to advocate for what is needed for the student to succeed.
- Share appreciation for team members time and contributions.

Collaborative Teaming in Schools

A collaborative team is two or more people working together voluntarily to accomplish mutual goals. Team collaboration can be a powerful tool to improve student access and success in the general education environment. However, teachers are often accustomed to working alone, and many school schedules do not have time built in for collaboration. Common misunderstandings about collaboration are that it happens regularly throughout the school day, that everyone does it as part of their work, that skills for collaboration come naturally, and that collaboration happens

³⁰ Ghere, G., Sommerness, J., & Vandercook, T. (2020). *The 5C Process*. TIES Center.

when everyone gets along.³¹

Collaborative teaming around a specific mission is work that extends beyond typical roles and responsibilities. Collaborative teamwork is characterized as shared responsibility, goal-oriented, and voluntary. Educators may engage collaboratively as members of a shared school community, but collaborative teams work on targeted goals toward positive and systemic change for students, teachers, and schools.

To be effective as a team, educators need to be open and willing to work with others, and systems need to be in place to incentivize teamwork. School leadership can support collaborative teaming by building in structured time for collaboration, assist with schedule and class changes as needed, and celebrating team success. Collaborative team meetings can be structured or spontaneous. Structured sit-down meetings are important for co-planning, reviewing data, and documenting decisions made in response to data. Spontaneous on-the-fly meetings and emails are good for checking in, building relationships, and following up on student progress. Once the team is established, they can meet less often. Figure 1-3 shows how collaborative teaming involves building a team structure and goals, using teamwork strategies, creating clear methods of communication, and using planning tasks and templates to document discussions and decisions.

Figure 1-3: Collaborative Teaming Components



Collaboration Skills and Strategies

Effective collaboration depends upon school structures, skills, and mindsets, but also interpersonal skills for building trust and relationships. Individuals have different styles of collaboration and communication, and different levels of interest or engagement in working with others. Individual approaches to tasks and problems will be based somewhat on each person's collaboration style. Awareness of your personal style of collaboration can begin with a self-assessment of collaboration skills (see [Appendix 1-B](#) for an example).

³¹ Janney, R., & Snell, M. (2006). Modifying schoolwork in inclusive classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 45(3), 215–223.

Communication Skills for Collaboration

Communication skills are the basic building blocks of collaborative interactions, including styles and strategies for sending and receiving messages, listening, and nonverbal communication, whether in person, through email, or in school-based systems of communication. The content of a message communicated by whatever means can be understood or interpreted in different ways, depending on how the message is framed or delivered. Sometimes emotions can distract from a message, or individual styles of communication create conflict. For example: One team member may have concerns related to how the team will make progress, who will make decisions, and who takes what action. Another team member may place a higher value on generating ideas, open dialogue, and allowing time and flexibility for long-range thinking. Reconciling differences respectfully is important using strategies such as seeking clarification, staying focused on the intent of communication, and allowing for multiple perspectives to be validated.

Communication skills essential for collaboration are listed in Table 1-2 below. The development and practice of these skills and, awareness of barriers, can help educators engage all team members in collaboration.

Table 1-2: Communication Skills & Barriers

Communication Skills	Barriers to Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of communication tools to deliver and receive messages and ideas. • Avoid giving advice unless asked. • Attend to feelings first, then content. • Convey respect and openness among professionals and families. • Active listening that does not interrupt, is open, and remembers what is said. • Reflect on what is said. • Nonverbal communication including eye contact, respect, positive attitude, and understanding. • Questions that are open and invite engaging conversation and contributions. • Statements regarding students or events that are accurate and descriptive. • Communication skills that honor cultural diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective use of communication tools that leads to confusion or misunderstandings. • Formulating questions or responses while another person is talking. • Allowing side thoughts and conversations. • Tuning out to filter information / selective attention. • Allowing self to get distracted by environment or technology. • Yes/no questions. • Lack of transparency and trust. • Use of jargon. • Language barriers. • Incongruity of verbal and nonverbal communication. • Emotional outbursts.

Communication with Families

Professional language and systems of communication in education are commonplace for educators, but not for most families. There are a myriad of acronyms and procedures in special

education that can be intimidating and impede families as partners and participants in their child's education. In the story of Billy, the IEP team communicated disagreement with the parent request for inclusion both verbally and nonverbally using terms such as "mainstreaming" and the need for "direct instruction". The initial resistance to what the parents wanted for their child created division between the parents and the team. A family advocate was needed to ensure the voice and participation of the parents was considered. Recognizing and honoring the family's everyday knowledge and expertise related to their child is critical for valuing them as members of the team. To ensure positive and productive participation of families, consider the following:

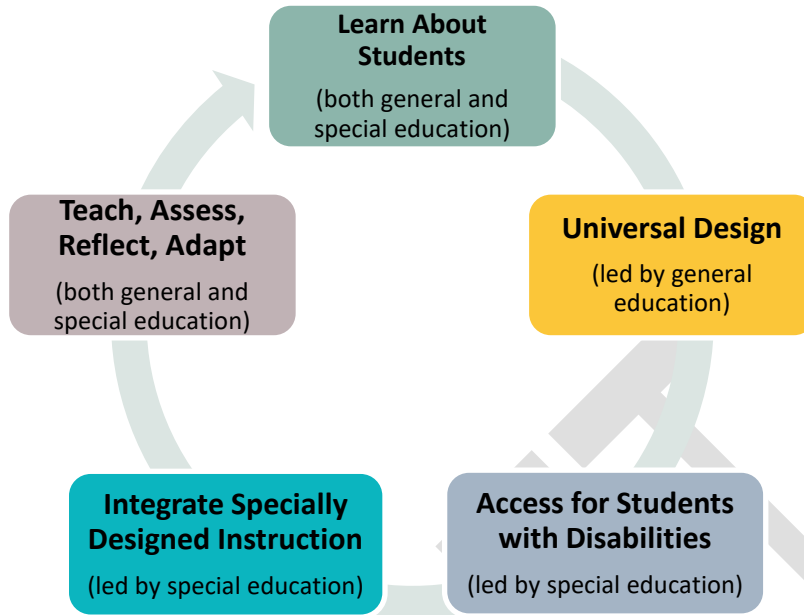
- Provide written and verbal communication related to the IEP in advance of meetings.
- Acknowledge and incorporate input from the family about their child.
- Communicate in a method and language preferred by the family.
- Use communication that is easy to understand and free of jargon.
- Maintain culturally responsive communication that considers multiple perspectives.
- Maintain respect and empathy for family concerns and their position outside of the school culture.
- Communication about people, routines, and events in classrooms (e.g., lesson themes, printed informational brochures, information about paraprofessional roles, introduce both general and special education teachers and other specialists).

Collaborative Lesson Planning

Collaborative planning in schools involves identifying and describing a problem or task, then bringing people together who are essential for working on the task and allowing the reciprocal exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information. The inclusion of students with disabilities depends upon collaboration between general and special education teachers and related service providers to meet regularly and transcend traditional roles.

When planning for inclusion, educators collaborate to plan for access to information and instruction, but also for transitions between classes, access within the classroom environment, assessments, peer interactions and mentoring, utilization of related services, and specially designed instruction. Figure 1-4 illustrates a process for collaborative planning between general and special education teachers, and their respective roles when learning about students, planning UDL, evaluating access, integrating SDI, and teaching.

Figure 1-4: Collaborative Curriculum Planning Process



Components of a collaborative planning process include:

- **Learning about students** is a joint activity, whereby the general and special education teacher are both involved in gathering information about a student with disabilities by observing them in different environments, reviewing assessments and work samples to determine present levels in academics and social-emotional development, and talking with families and familiar peers and adults in order to understand strengths and needs to develop meaningful IEP goals and an inclusion plan.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a component of effective core instruction led by the general education teacher. The instructional plans and activities are shared with the special education teachers and together they develop adaptations as needed for ensuring access for students with disabilities.
- **Evaluating access** for students with disabilities can be done by both general and special education teachers, but when led by the special education teacher, information can be gained through observation of general education classrooms, review of progress, getting input from the student and family, gathering work samples, and documenting challenges.
- **Integration of specially designed instruction** is led by the special education teacher and can be implemented by any educator or paraeducator who understands the plan as designed by the special education teacher.
- **Teach, assess, reflect, and adapt** is done by general and special educators with input from paraeducators to maintain student participation and learning in the general education classroom.
- **Repeating the cycle** will be necessary as new units of instruction are developed and as the student develops new skills and knowledge.

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is one way teachers can collaborate to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Co-teaching is when two or more credentialed teachers or a teacher and licensed specialist jointly plan, implement, and evaluate instruction together in a shared setting for a specific amount of time on a consistent basis.³² When general and special education teachers are in the same classroom, all students benefit from having two teachers, and students with disabilities benefit from being with a diverse group of students rather than isolated with other students with disabilities. A co-taught classroom reduces the stigma of having a disability and provides a more integrated and enriched standards-based curriculum with individualized support. Students with disabilities have better attendance and perform better academically in classes that are co-taught.³³

Co-teaching is different from the collaborative planning described above, where general education teachers maintain the lead in the general education classroom and collaborate with special education teachers to support students with disabilities in the classroom. Co-teaching is shared ownership of the room, instructional planning, adaptations, grading and assessments, and outcomes for all students. In a co-teaching model, the general education teacher can be the content specialist, and the special education teacher can be a strategic partner for specialized services.³⁴ Co-teaching can also allow a flexible exchange of skills and shared roles for delivering instruction, organizing content and/or skill development. The general education teacher has content expertise, and special education staff add high leverage practices and specially designed instruction strategies that can benefit all students, such as re-teaching, reinforcing, or restating instruction to enhance learning and connections to content (see Table 1-3).

Table 1-3: Supports and Barriers for Co-Teaching

Critical factors for Successful Co-Teaching	Challenges / Barriers to Co-Teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations of the co-teaching partnership, class procedures, student behaviors, class management, etc. • Shared responsibility for grading and progress monitoring. • Collaborative planning of content, instructional arrangements, student grouping, and flexing teacher roles. • Compatible styles of communication and feedback between co-teachers. • Crossing-over to share knowledge of general education curriculum and UDL, and strategies in SDI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited time for planning. • Low sense of efficacy (or confidence) in ability to co-teach or meet the needs of students with disabilities (Harvey et. al, 2010). • Lack of commitment to co-teaching. • Lack of skills in communication and problem solving. • Interrelational tensions. • Unequal participation in the co-teaching. • Unclear or shifting expectations.

³² Friend, M., and Cook, L. (2010). Co-Teaching: An illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*. 20(9), 9–27.

³³ Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2011). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pullout programs. *Exceptional Children*, 68(2), 14–29.

³⁴ Snell, M. E. & Janney, R. (2005). *Collaborative teaming: Teachers' guide to inclusive practices* (2nd Ed.). Brooks Publishing.

- Flexibility with changing roles, changes in routines, and adaptations for students with disabilities.
- Coordinated schedules for meeting, planning, delivering instruction, related service provision, transitions, etc.
- Planning adaptations (accommodations and modifications), flexible grouping, collaborative learning, and peer mentoring.
- Administrative support in setting priorities, redistributing resources, and allowing time for meeting to plan and debrief.
- A process and plan in place for resolving disagreements and conflict.

- Conflicting priorities about what is needed or most important in the management of the classroom or curriculum.
- Delegating responsibility of students with disabilities to the special education teacher or paraeducator.
- Different and incompatible philosophies on teaching or behavior/classroom management.

In a co-teaching classroom, paraeducators are not co-teachers. Although they may be fundamental to supporting students and a classroom, they do not have the equivalent credentials, knowledge, or experience and expertise of licensed practitioners, and they are not employed to carry out the responsibilities of a teacher. Rather, they are in a support role, delivering services and implementing specially designed instruction under the direction of the general and special education teacher.

Co-teaching in schools can be encouraged by administrators or requested by interested teachers. It is generally most successful when teachers willingly volunteer to be a team teacher, receive professional development in co-teaching, and find a willing partner. Co-teaching is one of many ways teachers can collaborate to support inclusion, but most teachers lack understanding and experience as a team teacher. Professional development in co-teaching can help teachers learn and develop strategies. Team teachers will need support from administrators, but also time to develop the skills for co-teaching, which can extend to school and district capacity for co-teaching.

Friend and Bursuck³⁵ describe a variety of instructional and classroom arrangements that general and special education teachers can use in a co-teaching model as described below (for a more detailed description of each, see [Appendix 1-C](#)):

- **Lead one / Support one:** One teacher teaches and the other observes/collects data.
- **Station Teaching:** Instruction is divided into segments or steps to be completed at each station.
- **Parallel Teaching:** Same lesson delivered simultaneously by both teachers to different groups.
- **Alternative Teaching:** Small group for specialized skills while larger group learns with the lead teacher.
- **Team Teaching:**

³⁵ Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2002). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- **Speak and Add:** Instruction delivered together / reciprocal conversation.
- **Speak and Chart:** Instruction delivered together / speaker/writer or media support.
- **Skill Groups:** Each teacher is responsible for specific groups of students working on particular skills.

Collaboration with Paraeducators

Paraeducators work alongside certified staff in schools to support the growth and success of students with disabilities and other students who need extra help in schools. They are sometimes referred to as paraprofessionals, paras, or educational assistants (EAs). The following is a description of the paraprofessional role from the Washington Administrative Code (WAC)³⁶:

(h) paraprofessional staff and aides shall present evidence of skills and knowledge established under the rules of the professional educator standards board, necessary to meet the needs of students eligible for special education and shall be under the supervision of a certificated teacher with a special education endorsement, or a certificated educational staff associate or a licensed staff.

Paraeducators play a critical role in ensuring students have a positive experience in school while engaged in learning and social opportunities. They can also be instrumental in supporting inclusionary practices. When paraeducators support inclusion, both general and special education teachers need to provide clear objectives and ensure paraeducators have the knowledge and skill to follow through with tasks. The special education teacher supervises implementation of specially designed instruction across learning environments, and the general education teacher works with the special education teacher to develop guidelines for the paraeducator when supporting the general education classroom.

Ongoing collaboration with paraeducators is critical for preventing student overdependence, interference with peer relationships, and inappropriate instruction.³⁷ In addition, paraeducators provide valuable input and information to the team on student progress. Barriers to collaboration with paraeducators can include inflexible school schedules and provisions in paraeducator contracts that limit how they spend their time in schools. To be effective, paraeducators need professional development, but also dedicated time to collaborate with certified teachers and staff. When paraeducators are valued members of the team in support of inclusion, the team and school leadership can advocate and find creative solutions to overcome barriers to collaboration with paraeducators. The following are best practices for including paraeducators in team collaboration:

- Encourage paraeducator participation in non-instructional team-building, team planning, and professional development activities.
- Create flexible schedules to allow collaboration with teams and certified educators.
- Encourage paraeducator representation on school and district leadership committees.
- Provide ongoing supervision and mentoring on specially designed instruction and social skill building.
- Assign paraeducators to classrooms to support all students and the primary teacher, while

³⁶ [WAC 392-172A-02090](#)

³⁷ Giangreco, M. F., Suter, J. C., & Doyle, M. B. (2010). Paraprofessionals in inclusive schools: A review of recent research. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20, 41–57.

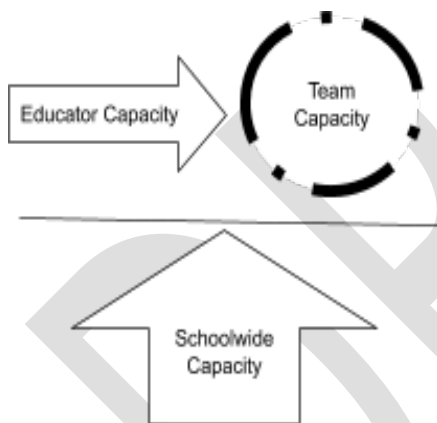
balancing time to promote student independence, and implementing SDI.

- Provide just enough student paraeducator support to promote student learning and independence.
- Prepare paraeducators to be culturally responsive and maintain confidentiality when communicating with families.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for paraeducators and all team members (See [Appendix 1-A](#) for examples).

Building Capacity for Collaboration

Capacity for collaboration can be developed within individual educators, in teams, and across school environments. As stated above, it does not come naturally. In fact, collaboration can be difficult, and requires sustained commitment to maintaining positive relationships and consensus-building. It cannot be forced or mandated, but must be voluntary (Jorgensen, 2018). Building this capacity in the educator depends upon reflection, introspection, interpersonal maturity, and professionalism. A culture of collaboration in the schoolwide work environment fosters and encourages educator capacity for collaboration, and effective collaboration within teams.

Figure 1-5: Capacity for Collaboration



Individual educator capacity for collaboration has a direct impact on team capacity for collaboration on behalf of students, as shown in Figure 1-5. Personal styles and preferences, as well as perceived expectations affect patterns of interaction and ways of communicating. Educators do not come to the profession with the same opinions about how diverse students should be educated, and where. Differences of opinion about student needs and the role of educators often come from beliefs and values that are not apparent, even to oneself. An example would be when a student exhibits disruptive behaviors, one member of a team may believe compliance and conformity is needed, while another believes tolerance and acceptance of

differences is the solution.

Differences of opinion are inherent in all relationships and workplaces, and skills are needed for maintaining positive relationships while establishing and working toward common goals. As mentioned previously, collaboration is not about liking everyone on the team, or even complete agreement. Rather, it's about establishing a shared goal and maintaining a positive and professional working relationship, even when there are differences and conflicts. Consensus does not mean everyone agrees but rather, decisions are made based on equal participation in the discussion and process. When reaching consensus, team members can support a decision even if not in full agreement. Working with diverse colleagues, students, and families requires that educators:

- 1) See and include multiple perspectives.
- 2) Recognize that adults are in different stages of readiness or understanding.

- 3) Maintain openness and flexibility with plans and agendas.
- 4) Explore multiple ways to communicate ideas and concepts.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice means maintaining an ongoing habit of reflection by looking back and thinking about what is happening in meetings and the school environment in order to learn from experience and actively engage in decision making and change. Schon³⁸ promotes reflective practice as a way for teachers to continually improve and grow personally and professionally. Reflective practice can help educators make sense of emotions, experiences, and problem situations in the context of collaboration with others. Ongoing reflection in a professional journal can help educators gain insights and feel prepared to contribute to conversations and decisions, tolerate ambiguity, and maintain open-mindedness. Self-awareness can emerge from reflective practices when mindful about personal reactions, perspectives, values, and biases.

While reflection as an individual practice can lead to personal growth and insight, there is a risk when reflecting alone that bias can be reinforced and go unchallenged when trying to make sense of self and situations. Reflective practices in a community means sharing insights and ideas gleaned from private reflections, and being open to change based upon the views, values, and needs of others. Reflection in a community can lead to fuller and more complex interpretations of situations related to collaboration, teaching, and ourselves. Overall, reflective practices can help educators hold the tension of opposites and focus on being present and open while building positive and productive relationships.³⁹

Professional Learning Communities

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is about establishing a collaborative culture of shared learning experiences that build capacity for continuous improvement across the school system. PLCs can seem superficial when “educators simply call what they are doing professional learning communities without going very deep into learning”.⁴⁰ To have the most impact on the culture of collaboration in school systems, PLCs should have a purpose or focus, be inclusive of all educators and administrators, and encompasses all schools within a district and beyond. School and districtwide professional learning can be done by establishing learning goals, setting topics and themes, and sharing materials. Schools can take turns adopting a topic or theme and developing materials and presentations that can be shared across schools within a district. Topics for PLCs that focus on collaboration and inclusionary practices could be identified through surveys, the Inclusionary Practices Self-Assessment, this handbook, and reviews of research and resources.

Collaboration Across Grade Levels and Learning Environments

Collaboration as an inclusionary practice will be different across grade levels and learning environments. Students with disabilities are first and foremost general education students with rights to access a basic general education as FAPE through special education services.

³⁸ Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.

³⁹ Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher.

⁴⁰ Fullan, M. (2006). Leading professional learning: Think ‘system’ and not ‘individual school’ if the goal is to fundamentally change the culture of schools. *The School Administrator*, 63(10), 10–14.

Collaboration across school grades and learning environments is essential in supporting students throughout their education.

Early Childhood Collaboration

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) service provision for children with disabilities ages three to five is multidisciplinary, whereby educators and related service providers coordinate the overlap of services to develop and work on IEP objectives. Strong collaboration is needed to ensure young children with disabilities make progress in the least restrictive environment. Barriers to collaboration among ECSE teams can include philosophical differences, poor communication, and lack of time for planning together. Recognizing the barriers and problem solving is essential to building a strong community of support for young children with disabilities and their families. Characteristics of ECSE services include the following:

- Emphasis on social skills and peer interactions.
- Providers mediate and facilitate child learning experiences.
- Family-centered planning.
- Connecting families with community resources and events.

Elementary School Collaboration

In elementary schools, students with disabilities are on the roster for a single general education teacher throughout the year. Collaboration between educators and service providers at the elementary level evolves over that year as the team develops tiered systems and responsive interventions for equal access to academic standards. Characteristics of collaboration in the elementary grades includes the following:

- Multiple subjects taught in one classroom by one general education teacher.
- Minimal in-school transitions.
- Push in and pull out models of collaboration for special groups.
- Instruction throughout the day varies from teacher-directed to small group and project-based learning.
- Both indirect consultation and team teaching to support IEP goals.

Secondary School Collaboration

In middle and high school, students are figuring out who they are as teenagers and students, and they start thinking more deeply about their future in the world. They need to have access to a variety of core curriculum and need support and guidance as they navigate the transition from childhood, to becoming self-aware, self-regulating, and self-determined. Secondary students need guidance in school on how to learn and respond to a variety of educators. Collaboration between secondary general and special education is about helping students get access to the things they want to learn, and experience success. Barriers to collaboration at the secondary level can include facilitating access to complex core content taught by different teachers at different times throughout the day, as well as coordinating collaboration with numerous educators to plan for and support individual students. Each secondary classroom is unique, and students can't always adapt without an adult liaison to advocate on their behalf as they learn different systems for each class. Special education teachers need to collaborate with multiple educators at the secondary level who may bring different content area knowledge and different awareness levels of inclusionary practices. Areas where strategic collaboration can support student progress include:

- Student lead IEPs bring students in as collaborators, advocating for what they need to be successful and exercising self-awareness, self-regulation and self-determination.
- Community Collaboration for community based job placement, independent living skills such as navigating a grocery store or bus system or finding community service opportunities to build students skills and connect students to their community.
- Career and Technical Educator and Special Educator collaboration to support all students access and make progress in career and technical education classes.
- Collaboration between special educators and school counselors to support all students in their transition planning and High School and Beyond Plan development

Transition-Age Collaboration:

Secondary transition collaboration for students with disabilities between the ages of 18 to 21 involves different teams than for school age students, based on goals and services that support transition into adulthood and the workforce. Person-centered planning is fundamental to transitions, as are community learning experiences. Transition-age students can lead their own IEPs and direct their own High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) by setting goals and a vocational course of study related to their interests and vocational goals. Challenges include coordinating services and support from multiple agencies to create a seamless system of transition. The following are a few examples of partners who might collaborate to support successful transition:

- Students
- Families
- Paraeducators
- Employment Providers and Supports
- Special Education Case Managers
- School Counselors
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
- Developmental Disability Resources
- Community Businesses

Collaboration Online

Collaboration continues to be critical for students with disabilities when planning and teaching in online instructional models. Core education and specially designed instruction to address IEP goals and objectives can be implemented in partial or fully online environments. Collaborative teams can work together online to coordinate access to general education curriculum, materials, technologies, and digitized materials. The following are examples of possible online collaboration for educators:

- Have someone with expertise pre-record a video on a topic to share in the online class.
- Team teach in an online class to deliver content, or share roles for managing technology, chats, and break out rooms.
- Schedule times to meet online to collaboratively plan instruction and student participation.

Activity: Team-Building with Operational Goal Writing

Establishing clear mission and goals as a collaborative team is essential for working together effectively and efficiently. Operational goals guide the team in planning and carrying out a task and are grounded in a team mission. The steps to achievement are easily identified, observable, and specific. Nonoperational goals are when steps are not observable, indiscernible, and ambiguous. The team develops goals through discussion and operationalizes the goals through consensus. There should be multiple Indicators of achieving a goal, and indicators should reflect both accomplishing the goal and the effectiveness of the team.

As a team activity, identify a possible team mission and write operational goals and indicators.

Here's an example:

Team mission	Operational goals	Indicators of meeting the goal
Foster student independence in the general education classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign paraeducator to classroom rather than individual students. • Write action plans for paraeducator to know when and to what extent support is provided to the student. • Ask the general education teacher to provide directions and communicate directly with the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students in the classroom are supported by the paraeducator. • Plans for paraeducator are developed and reviewed/updated collaboratively. • Ensure students work independently and connect directly with the teacher for help. • The team works together to make sure goals are clear and provide ongoing feedback to paraeducator.

Activity: Your turn to try!

Team mission	Operational goals	Indicators of meeting the goal

Review the following list of collaborative team-building activities. Consider your individual practices

and your school team practice to improve the collaborative team structure, develop goals, and celebrate success.

Collaborative Team-Building Activities:

- ✓ Discuss and develop a shared the meaning of inclusion and why it's important.
- ✓ Identify inclusionary practices currently in place.
- ✓ Discuss questions and concerns related to inclusion.
- ✓ Identify the vision, mission, and goals for inclusion for the team.
- ✓ Reflect on current collaborative practices.
- ✓ Identify barriers to collaboration and inclusion.
- ✓ Identify priorities for building collaborative teams and inclusionary practices.
- ✓ Identify needed professional development to expand inclusionary practices.
- ✓ Ensure general educators are comfortable with special education teachers and related service providers observing and sharing space in the classroom.
- ✓ Share values in relation to rules, expectations, and procedures, and acceptable alternatives.
- ✓ Identify observation goals for general education classes and across school environments.
- ✓ Agree on method of sharing information and providing feedback.
- ✓ Commitment to shared ownership of engagement and outcomes for all students.

Summary

In this chapter on collaboration for inclusionary practices, there is an emphasis on the work it takes for teams to examine school practices and create positive changes that support inclusion. Engaging in effective collaboration with colleagues and families requires team members to practice skills in communication, collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and reflective practice. Collaboration that focuses on inclusionary practices depends upon the schoolwide culture, redefined roles supported by the school and district leadership, and inclusive mindsets that believe in the strengths and potential of all students. Collaborative teams need to come together to create opportunities for students across environments and throughout their school experience.

Consider the following questions for individual reflection or small-group discussion:

- Which collaboration activities are strengths in your school or district system?
- How might these strengths be leveraged toward collaborative partnerships in support of inclusion across grade levels and learning environments?

APPENDIX 1-A: REDEFINING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COLLABORATION

Roles and responsibilities evolve as schools move from mostly separate yet parallel education models to a more integrated model of shared time, resources, and expertise. Inclusionary practices must be school-wide rather than a teacher at a time.

Activity: Below are the redefined collaborative roles and responsibilities for students, families, educators, and administrators. Please review roles individually and/or as a team, reflect on your role and practices, and set goals toward increasing collaboration as an inclusionary practice.

Families and Students

- Family opportunities to visit the classrooms.
- Teachers and administrators welcome families into decision-making processes for student achievement and instruction.
- Communication throughout the year, and not just related to IEP.
- Families are included in all school-based functions and volunteer opportunities.
- Families and students collaborate in writing IEP goals.
- Input is solicited from families when school policies and procedures are updated.
- School-based parent-teacher associations and site councils include students with disabilities and their families.
- The school connects families with community resources.
- Families are included in school-based leadership teams for inclusion.

General Education Teacher

- Have ownership for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
- Create a classroom culture that honors diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.
- Include the special education teacher and related service providers as equal partners in the planning, delivery, and assessment of learning.
- Utilize practices of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiation for diverse learners.
- Participate in the planning and implementation of behavioral support.
- Actively participate in the development and implementation of IEPs.
- Actively participate in providing guidance and support to personnel working with SWD.
- Communicates routinely with special education teachers and staff.
- Work collaboratively with special education teachers and related service providers to implement specially designed instruction.
- Recruit and train students to be tutors and peer buddies.

- Implements accommodations and modifications.
- Monitor and provide information to the team and family on academic, social, and IEP progress in general education.
- Co-teach with special educators.
- Provide guidance and clear expectations for paraprofessionals in the classroom.
- Prepare summaries on student participation and progress in general education for team meetings.

Special Education Teacher or Related Service Provider

- Actively participate with general education teachers and others in collaborative planning, instruction, development of communication plans, and the evaluation of academic and social progress.
- Include the general education teacher as an equal partner in the planning, delivery, and assessment of learning.
- Model strategies for supporting students with disabilities such as facilitating peer support, fostering independence, and embedding interventions.
- Identify and communicate adaptations for instructional methods and materials.
- Ensure that general education teachers have a copy of the IEP / goals.
- Coordinate participation in the Individualized Education Plan.
- Collaborate with others to develop schedules and interventions for paraeducators and assistants.
- Observe students with disabilities in the general education setting.
- Work with others to coordinate assessments and grades with general education teachers.
- Work with others to coordinate ongoing meetings and progress monitoring.
- Provide workshops on research-based methods for students with disabilities to teachers and educational assistants, and school staff.
- Pre-teach and reteach skills and content as needed.
- Work collaboratively to keep families informed of student progress.
- Plan for transitions between classes and within class, as well as grade to grade.
- Teach cooperative group lessons on social and academic skills.
- Co-teach with general educators.
- Create snapshots of IEPs for general education teachers (if not done by automated system).
- Work with others to train, direct, and supervise paraeducators.
- Mentor and manage duties of paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities.
- Communicate clear expectations and feedback for working with students.

- Develop schedules and partnerships with other educators.
- Communicate paraeducator role with co-teachers and families.
- Model desired strategies for services, behavior support, independence, and social skills.

Paraeducator

- Know strengths and skills for the role and request needed training.
- Maintain regular communication with special and general education teachers, as well as related service providers.
- Teach individuals and small groups as directed by general and special education teachers.
- Provide support to the whole class as needed and directed by lead teachers.
- Discuss teaching and management strategies with educators related to student goals.
- Receive and implement training for interventions.
- Monitor and document student progress as directed.
- Interact with all students in ways that build positive relationships among peers in academic and non-academic activities.
- Provide support to all students and the whole class, while being available to implement SDI and behavior support for students with disabilities.
- Maintain confidentiality and abstain from informal discussions of school or student issues, information or problems outside of school or in the presence of students or unauthorized adults.
- Maintain positive relationships with families and only communicate about student progress with teacher's approval.
- Reflect and improve on teaching, record management, and behavior management.
- Facilitate student independence and relationships with lead teacher and peers.
- Build on student strengths and reinforce positive behaviors.

Administrator: Building and District-Level Leader(s)

- Communicate a district wide vision and mission of inclusionary practices.
- Facilitate collaborative practices aligned with district and school wide vision and mission.
- Implement school wide systems for collaboration and inclusion such as UDL and MTSS.
- Develop master schedules that allow time for collaboration and shared planning.
- Ensure student access to general education curriculum, textbooks, assistive technology, and evidence-based teaching strategies.
- Provide opportunities for educators and families to develop collaboration skills.
- Provide Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that support inclusionary practices.
- Address collaborative skills and practices in teacher reviews and evaluations.

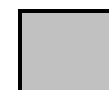
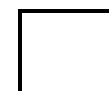
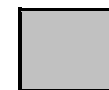
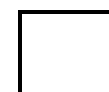
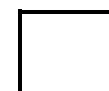
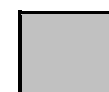
- Ensure all students have access to co-curricular opportunities.
- Redefine roles of educators and staff to support collaboration and inclusionary practices.
- Supervise paraeducators and consider effectiveness in collaboration and inclusion support.
- Promote the inclusion of the families of students with disabilities in school leadership committees and parent-teacher associations.
- Provide release time and opportunities for professional development for educators and staff.
- Allocate resources that allow time for educators to collaborate and support inclusionary practices.
- Balancing and reconciling conflicting goals, priorities, and practices that don't align with the vision and mission of inclusionary practices.
- Maintain ongoing review of effectiveness of school/district-wide collaborative practices.

DRAFT

APPENDIX 1-B: COLLABORATION SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Category	1	2	3	4	Explanation
Contribution	I tend not to share ideas, information, or resources.	I share ideas, information, and resources upon request.	I usually share ideas, information, and resources.	I freely share ideas, information, and resources.	
Motivation/ Participation	I tend not to participate or remain engaged when a project moves away from my own immediate interests.	I sometimes make an effort to participate and remain engaged when a project moves away from my own immediate interests.	I often make an effort to participate and remain engaged even when a project moves away from my own immediate interests.	I can be relied on to participate and remain engaged even when a project moves away from my own immediate interests.	
Quality of Work	My work reflects very little effort and often needs to be checked and/or redone by others to ensure quality.	My work reflects some effort but occasionally needs to be checked and/or redone by others to ensure quality.	My work reflects a strong effort. I self-monitor to improve the quality of my work.	My work reflects my best efforts. I continuously make small changes to improve the quality of my work.	
Time Management	I rarely get things done by the deadline and others often have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities.	I tend to procrastinate, meaning others may have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities.	I usually use time well to ensure that things are done so others do not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities.	I routinely use time well to ensure things are done on time.	
Team Support	I am often critical of the team or the work of fellow group members when I am in other settings.	Occasionally I am critical of the team or the work of fellow group members when I am in other settings.	I usually represent the team and the work of fellow members in a positive manner when I am in other settings.	I represent the team and the work of fellow group members in a positive manner when I am in other settings.	
Preparedness	I forget or lose materials needed to work.	I make an effort to bring or find materials needed to work, but often misplace things.	I usually bring needed materials and come ready to work.	I consistently bring needed materials and come ready to work.	
Problem Solving	I usually do not participate in group problem solving with an open mind. I either tend not to share my thoughts and ideas or I inhibit the contributions of others.	I make an effort to participate in group problem solving with an open mind. I generally share my thoughts and ideas, but I sometimes inhibit the contributions of others.	I usually participate in group problem solving with an open mind, sharing thoughts and ideas without inhibiting the contributions of others.	I consistently participate in group problem solving with an open mind, sharing thoughts and ideas without inhibiting the contributions of others.	
Team Dynamics	I do not know how to gauge my own impact on the group, and am generally unaware of team dynamics.	I occasionally know how to gauge my own impact on the group and am somewhat aware of team dynamics.	I often know how to gauge my own impact on the group and am generally aware of team dynamics.	I consistently know how to gauge my own impact on the group and am routinely aware of team dynamics.	
Category	1	2	3	4	Explanation

SCORE



SCORE

Interactions with Others	I rarely listen to, respect, acknowledge, or support the efforts of others. I allow conflict or personal differences to interfere with communication.	I sometimes listen to, respect, acknowledge and support the efforts of others, but at times allow conflict or personal differences to interfere with communication.	I usually listen to, respect, acknowledge, and support the efforts of others. I occasionally allow conflict or personal differences to interfere with communication.	I consistently listen to, respect, acknowledge, and support the efforts of others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Role Flexibility	I like to either lead or follow but am uncomfortable when functioning outside my perceived role.	I am uncomfortable with role flexibility but attempt to move outside my perceived role.	I can assume both roles (leader and follower) but am more comfortable in one role than the other.	I can easily move between leader and follower, assuming either role as needed to accomplish the task.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflection	I rarely engage in self-reflection after collaborative activities but tend to focus on the behavior of others.	Self-reflection occurs after collaborative activities when prompted or reminded by others.	Self-reflection usually occurs after collaborative activities, but most often when things don't go well.	I consistently use self-reflection after collaborative activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Total Score:

Max score: 44 points

Guide to Scoring:

- 10-25: Collaboration skills are emerging
- 26-34: Collaboration skills are developing
- 35-44: Collaboration skills are established

Personal reflection: What have you learned about yourself by completing this rubric? What skill area do you want to target for personal improvement? What one thing could you do tomorrow to begin your skill enhancement?

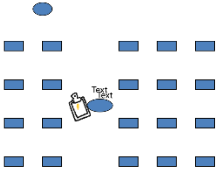
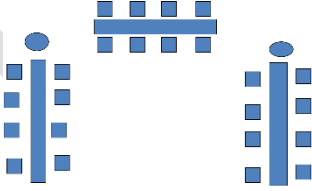
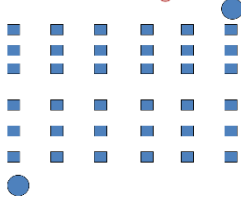
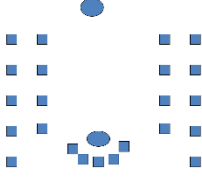
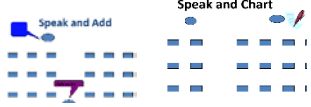
Interpersonal vs. Intrapersonal skills: Shaded boxes represent - interpersonal skills, clear score boxes represent - intrapersonal skills.

Interpersonal score

Intrapersonal score

* note that the scores will most likely be different as there are unequal numbers of boxes.

APPENDIX 1-C: CO-TEACHING MODELS

Co-Teaching Model ⁴¹ :	Strategies:	Visual/Layout:
Lead one / Support one:		
<p>One teacher teaches and the other observes / collects data, etc.</p> <p>Primary teacher designs and delivers instruction.</p> <p>Support teacher “drifts” to provide assistance.</p> <p>Good for those new to collaborative arrangements.</p> <p>Drawback: If used indiscriminately or exclusively can default to special education teacher as “assistant”.</p>	<p>Communicate in/out boxes that do not interrupt teaching.</p> <p>Behavior documentation and homework charts.</p> <p>Materials station- (both teachers need access).</p> <p>“See Me Later” cards for teacher communication.</p>	<p>Lead and Support</p> 
Station Teaching:		
<p>Instructional content is divided for small groups.</p> <p>Students move from station to station.</p> <p>One station can be independent work or peer tutoring.</p> <p>Students with disabilities are integrated.</p> <p>Planning involves dividing content and coordination of delivery.</p> <p>Drawbacks: can include noise and activity, content may need to be adapted differently in each group, time must be monitored.</p>	<p>Use of timers and signals.</p> <p>Practice routines as a class.</p> <p>Have colored index cards stating student role at stations.</p> <p>Table tents with directions.</p> <p>Always have something for them to turn in.</p> <p>Provide anchor activities.</p>	<p>Station Teaching</p> 
Parallel Teaching:		
<p>Teaching same content at same time to small groups.</p> <p>Purpose is to lower student-teacher ratio.</p> <p>Good for drill and practice, test review, projects.</p> <p>Not good for initial instruction unless both teachers are prepared.</p> <p>Drawbacks: noise and activity levels high, needs to be paced equally.</p>	<p>Break groups by learning styles or interest.</p> <p>Create heterogeneous groupings (vs. skill level).</p> <p>Include brain breaks.</p> <p>Teach with a timer to keep everyone on track.</p>	<p>Parallel Teaching</p> 
Alternative Teaching:		
<p>Pre-teaching or reteaching content.</p> <p>One teacher works with a small group while the other teacher teaches a large group.</p> <p>Risk is students with disabilities will be stigmatized by repeated groupings. Avoided by changing composition of the group (differentiate by learning style, interest, etc.)</p>	<p>Use mini dry erase boards.</p> <p>Have accessible computer station.</p> <p>Create individualized folders with appropriate work.</p> <p>Provide adapted classics or modified books.</p>	<p>Alternative Teaching</p> 
Team Teaching:		
<p>Both teachers are responsible for planning and instruction of all students.</p> <p>Requires greatest level of mutual trust and commitment.</p> <p>Requires flexibility, especially with teaching style.</p>	<p>Team Teaching Models:</p> <p>Speak and Add</p> <p>Speak and Chart</p> <p>Skill Groups</p>	

⁴¹ Adapted from Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2013). *Interactions. Collaboration Skills for School Professionals*. (7th ed). Pearson. NJ

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CHAPTER 2: INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Chapter two of section one in the OSPI Inclusionary Practices Handbook titled, *Inclusive Learning Environments*, will review critical attributes of an inclusive general education setting and practices that facilitate participation and belonging for students with disabilities. The general education setting is the primary learning environment for general education curriculum for all students, and the setting from which all other school learning environments connect. Students with disabilities are first and foremost general education students, with the added rights and protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for special education services. One of the provisions of IDEA is the right to general education in the least restrictive environment (LRE), alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible.⁴² An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed for every student who qualifies for special education, and the purpose of the IEP is to outline goals, services, and a plan for accessing general education, as determined by the IEP team. The historical pattern of separation of students with disabilities has perpetuated marginalization from general education curriculum and settings, and a barrier to change. Although IDEA mandates are meant to ensure access to general education for all students with disabilities, there is considerable variation across schools and students in terms of where and how services are provided. This chapter will highlight some of the ways general education settings can be more inclusive of and accessible to students with a range of disabilities, and how *all* general education settings can be prepared as a LRE placement option for special education services.

Inclusive learning environments are described by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC, p.49) as:

Welcoming and accepting of each and every learner including those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion, and those who traditionally have been left out or excluded from appropriate educational and learning opportunities. Inclusive approaches embrace diversity; provide access to high-level knowledge, skills, and application for every student; adapt instruction to meet individual needs; encourage co-teaching and collaboration among general and resource educators; foster collaboration with families and community members; maintain high expectations of all students; and support student achievement and growth.⁴³

These standards are written for *all* educators, and this description of an inclusive learning environment is intended for *all* students. As a first activity in this chapter, educators are encouraged to evaluate their own environments using the Learning Environment Educator Reflection ([Appendix 2-A](#)), which was created based on the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards.

Preparing for diverse students, including the unique needs of students with disabilities, requires educators to work together, and believe that all students belong together. Engaging in culturally responsive education means recognizing and closing equity gaps.⁴⁴ To do this, educators must always strive to understand diverse student experiences, abilities, talents, and backgrounds to create learning environments that value and appreciate differences in race, ability, language,

⁴² [Individuals with Disability Education Act \(IDEA\) \(2004\) \(20 U.S.C. § 1412\[a\]\[5\]\[A\]\)](#)

⁴³ [InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progression for Teachers](#)

⁴⁴ Stemberge, A. (2020). *Culturally responsive education in the classroom. An equity framework for pedagogy.* Routledge. NY, NY.

gender, culture, and family values. To teach diverse learners effectively, teachers must develop a deep understanding of their own frames of reference, their own biases, and the impact of those biases on learning expectations and relationships with learners and their families. This chapter will explore concepts of equity and universal design as foundations of inclusive environments for all students, as well as considerations for promoting meaningful participation of students with disabilities in the curriculum and community of general education.

Access and Equity for Students with Disabilities

Federal policies written since the passage of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, include mandates that protect the rights and increase access to schools and society for individuals with disabilities (see [Appendix 2-B](#)). A provision of (IDEA) is that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled.⁴⁵ IDEA also states that a continuum of placement options be provided for students to receive special education when alternate settings are determined necessary by the IEP team ([Appendix 2-C](#)). Despite LRE mandates and policies that require schools to include students with disabilities in systems of accountability, they continue to be educated separate from general education settings. Meaningful inclusion in general education requires cultural and structural changes within schools, and recognition of how historical patterns of exclusion based on disability have perpetuated stigmas, marginalization, and discrimination:

- **Stigmas** are negative reactions to perceived differences based on cultural and social norms. Stigmas lead to implicit bias, discrimination, and resistance to change. Students with disabilities are stigmatized by systems and practices that treat them differently because of a disability.
- **Marginalization** is restrictions on participation in aspects of schools and society, creating disconnect and disadvantage. Students with disabilities have been routinely marginalized from cultural, social, and academic participation in general education classrooms, the school community, and society because of their disability.
- **Discrimination** is when decisions result in different and unfair treatment of people, based on one or more characteristics.

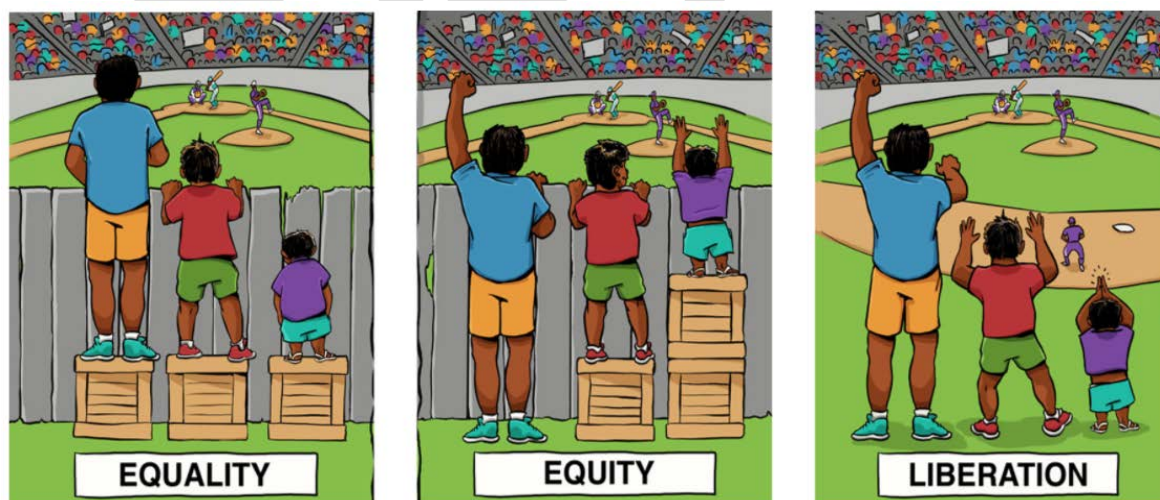
To address these barriers of mindset and break the cycle of oppression for people with disabilities, it is necessary to recognize the injustices in the system and advocate for equity and inclusion. Educators and administrators can ensure meaningful participation in general education for students with disabilities by examining current school practices, beliefs, and biases, and by working together to ensure equality, equity, and access in education.

⁴⁵ [IDEA \(2004\). Least Restrictive Environment. 20 U.S.C. 1412\(a\)\(5\)\(A\)](#)

Equality:	Equity:	Access:
<p>Equality is equal rights and opportunities for all students. Equality can also mean expectations and resources are the same (equal) regardless of different needs, interests, or starting points of students. Equal opportunity is important, but a focus on uniformity as fairness does not allow all students equal access to opportunities.</p>	<p>Equity is giving students what they need and different levels or types of support so they can take advantage of opportunities and accomplish a goal. Equity is ensuring everyone has what they need to gain access to equal opportunities. Support to students is individualized based on their unique needs.</p>	<p>Access is the removal of structural, philosophical, and pedagogical barriers to allow equal and equitable opportunities for all, regardless of sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, language, and class (decrease opportunity gaps).</p>

Equality is when schools provide the same opportunities for all students. However, not every student has the same background, knowledge, skills, or resources for accessing those opportunities. Equity works in tandem with equality by providing every student what they need to take advantage of opportunities to access learning in a variety of environments. In Figure 2-1 below, an equal opportunity means everyone gets the same box to see over the fence and watch the game, but if equal means the boxes are the same for everyone, then some still cannot participate. If the boxes are equitable, they will be different sizes based on need, so everyone can see over the fence. In the final frame, boxes are not needed because access for all is built into the design by removing the fence. If barriers to learning, such as the fence, are eliminated from the start, educators and students can be liberated from the need to overcome structural barriers, which also minimizes the need to make adaptations.

Figure 2-1: Interaction Institute for Social Change



Accessible school and classroom environments are essential for implementing inclusionary practices. Conducting a disability equity audit can help identify strengths and needed

improvements in the school, classrooms, and curriculum.⁴⁶ The following classroom equity questions can help with planning an inclusive learning environment⁴⁷:

- Do all students have equal access to the environment, materials, and activities in the classroom?
- Are adaptations made to ensure equity?
- Are all students held to the same standards?
- Does the classroom have various ways students can access print materials?
- Is language used that does not stigmatize or stereotype differences?
- Do the classroom and curriculum reflect a diverse society, and the diversity of the students?

Universal Design for Environments

The inclusion of students with disabilities depends upon a schoolwide culture of acceptance and effective strategies for engaging and teaching diverse learners. An inclusive school culture ensures access, meaningful participation, and membership of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and community as a basic right. Universal Design (UD) is a framework for ensuring access to physical spaces such as schools and classrooms. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for ensuring access to learning for all students. Inclusive learning environments that incorporate UD and UDL can improve outcomes for the greatest number of diverse students.

Universal Design

UD began as an approach to designing home environments and commercial buildings to be accessible by people with different mobility needs, reducing the need to retrofit spaces. UD is in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991 to protect people with disabilities from discrimination. UD in schools and classrooms involves identifying barriers, improving access, minimizing the need for structural adaptations, and supporting diverse abilities. A review of the principles of UD below can help when planning or evaluating settings and materials.

Seven Principles of Universal Design⁴⁸:

1. *Equitable use.* The design is useful to people with diverse abilities.
2. *Flexibility in use.* The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. *Simple and intuitive.* Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
4. *Perceptible information.* The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. *Tolerance for error.* The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

⁴⁶ Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC). (2020). [Equity audit](#).

⁴⁷ Adapted from Chardin, M. & Novak, K. (2021). *Equity by design. Delivering on the power and promise of UDL*. Corwin Press. Thousand Oaks, CA.

⁴⁸ [Universal Design: Process, Principles and Applications](#)

6. *Low physical effort.* The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, with minimum fatigue.
7. *Size and space for approach and use.* Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility, such as a flexible work area designed for left- or right-handed people.

An example of an ADA accessibility requirement is that classrooms need to be wheelchair accessible.⁴⁹ The law states tables must be between 28 and 34 inches high with at least 24 inches of knee clearance to accommodate students in wheelchairs. Adjustable tables are recommended, but not required, to better accommodate students. This ADA requirement is consistent with principles of universal design. The following questions may be helpful when evaluating an environment for accessibility:

- Is the physical space and arrangement adaptable to different learning activities?
- Can all students move about the classroom and access all spaces and materials?
- Are students permitted different positions and equipment to be comfortable while learning (i.e. multiple/flexible seating options)?
- Are expectations and rules of the classroom displayed in ways all students can understand (even those below grade level in reading) by using visuals)?
- Are students happy with the room arrangement and choices, and permitted to add input?
- Are stages, processes, and directions for projects and activities clearly communicated to promote independence?

Universal Design for Learning

While universal design is specific to removing barriers and creating accessible spaces for all users, universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework for recognizing and removing barriers to learning and designing instruction for diverse students. Historically, general education was designed with curriculum, instruction, and expectations the same for all students. Learning challenges were viewed as a problem with the learner rather than with the curriculum, instruction, or the environment.

Table 2-1 shows the contrast between traditional and UDL classroom practices.⁵⁰ In the traditional model, students must adapt to unidimensional teaching methods. Current research on learning and the brain shows every learner has different strengths and needs when learning, and equitable opportunities in education require varied teaching approaches. More information on the application of research-based principles of UDL is available through the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).⁵¹

⁴⁹ [ADA Requirements for Classroom Seating.](#)

⁵⁰ [Iris Center UDL](#)

⁵¹ [CAST](#)

Table 2-1: Traditional Instruction vs Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Instruction

Traditional Instruction	Universal Design for Learning Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers typically deliver content one way.• Students are passive learners who acquire information through memorizing, practicing, and taking tests.• The learning environment encourages students to sit quietly and work on an identical task.• Students' skills and knowledge of content are assessed using one method.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers deliver content in multiple ways.• Students are active learners who engage and analyze the content to gain understanding.• The learning environment encourages students to explore the content based on personal interests, preferences, or abilities.• Students can demonstrate their skills and knowledge using one of several methods.

In the UDL environment, the educator adapts lessons to students with different strengths, needs, background, interests, and preferences to reduce barriers and increase student engagement. Information can be gathered on student diversity using surveys or inventories of strength and preference such as the Barsch Inventory.⁵² To learn more about UDL and planning for variable learners, review the CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 2.2.⁵³

The UDL framework provides an alternative to the deficit-driven approach to education, whereby students who struggle are viewed as the problem instead of considering barriers that exist within the curriculum design or environment. For example, asking young children to wait longer than is developmentally appropriate can cause some students to move around or try to avoid the expectation. To prevent students from being perceived as defiant or disruptive, consider removing extended wait time by changing the procedure and keeping students engaged up until time for a transition. An understanding of UDL can help educators plan an environment that prepares for learner variability and minimizes the need for adaptations by recognizing and removing barriers and designing with flexibility.

Technology is a feature of UDL design that allows for alternate ways to access learning. When planning and setting up the UDL learning environment at the beginning of a school year, or when given a classroom budget, educators do an inventory and request for text, audio, and image tools and materials⁵⁴ to implement UDL and facilitate access to learning through multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (figure 2-2).⁵⁵ A more detailed description of each principle of UDL can be found at the CAST website.⁵⁶

⁵² [Barsch Inventory](#)

⁵³ [CAST: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 2.2](#)

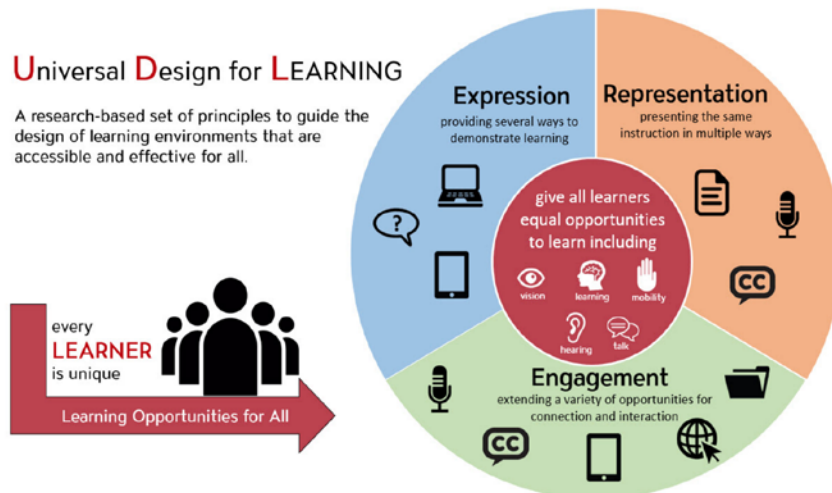
⁵⁴ [Iris Center Instructional materials](#)

⁵⁵ [CSUN Universal Design Center](#)

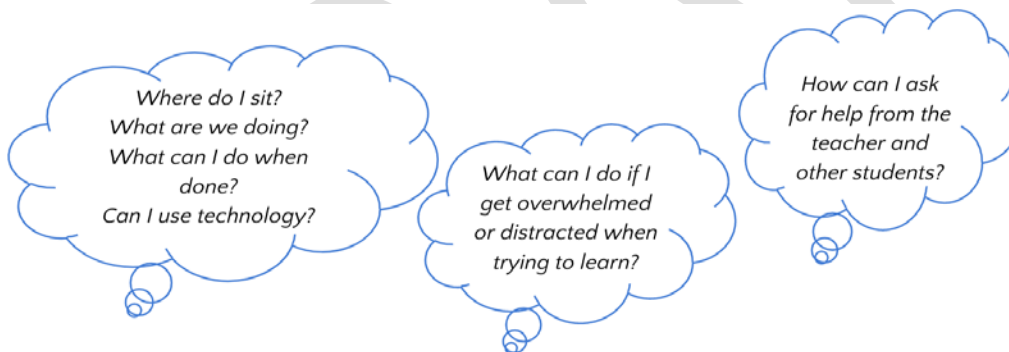
⁵⁶ [CAST Guidelines](#)

Figure 2-2: Principles of UDL

Inspired by Universal Design, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) applies these concepts in the education context, with the goal of minimizing barriers and maximizing learning for all students.



Principles of UDL are essential to teaching, but also to setting up environments. When setting up an inclusive learning environment, consider how routines, schedules, and rules are represented, how students can engage, and various means of expression or self-advocacy. Anticipating student questions like those in the thought bubbles below, can help plan for multiple ways to display and communicate information within the environment using visuals, text, images, and in the organization and arrangement of the room to help.



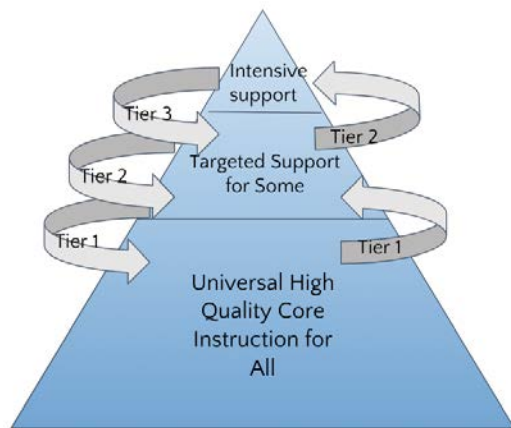
Every classroom will implement UDL in different ways, based on the uniqueness of the teacher and the group of students. No two inclusive learning communities will look alike, but they can be guided by the same principles. The following are the “Top 5 UDL Tips” for teachers when preparing an environment to reflect the why, the what, and the how of learning:⁵⁷

1. Design the space to match the learning goal.
2. Offer resource areas accessible to all.
3. Integrate digital resources and materials.
4. Highlight the learning processes in the environment.
5. Ensure access to target goals in the learning environment.

⁵⁷ [CAST: Top 5 UDL Tips for Learning Environments](#)

Schoolwide Systems of Support for Inclusive Learning Environments

Figure 2-3 Tiered Supports



In addition to UDL, tiered instruction and interventions support inclusion schoolwide and within individual classrooms. A Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework (see Figure 2-3) is a schoolwide system that integrates tiered frameworks such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). Together, these systems enhance student engagement and positive behaviors using increasing levels of support for individual students based on needs and data-based decision making. The successful implementation of tiered intervention frameworks depends upon a unified schoolwide approach and commitment. These systems are built

into the structure of inclusive learning environments and support learning and positive relationships. More can be learned about applications of the MTSS in Washington state at the OSPI MTSS website.⁵⁸

Learning Environments as Ecosystems

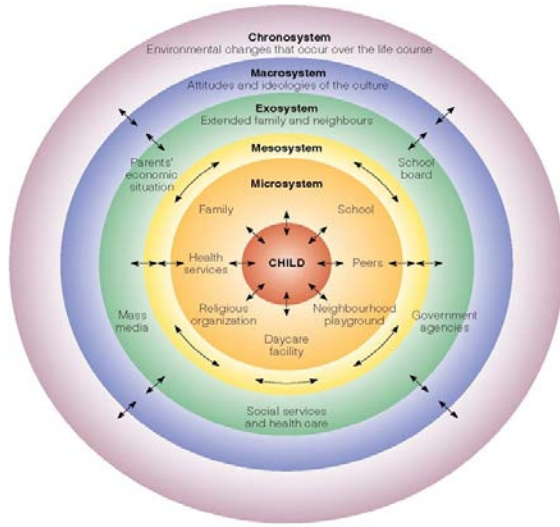
Context relates to features of an instructional setting and the creation of the social environment in which learning occurs. Learning contexts do not exist independent of other contexts but are connected in various ways and in a larger system. Bronfenbrenner's⁵⁹ ecological theory describes how individuals exist within systems composed of complex layers of interaction, and communities that are both unique to each individual, and socially-constructed.

An ecological framework represents how each learner is situated in a learning context within a micro system that is surrounded by concentric circles of influence and support. The learner brings to that learning context an individual biology, temperament, self-concept, and worldview. The interaction between the learner and context impacts the self and other systems or circles that the student weaves in and out of (see Figure 2-4).

⁵⁸ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#)

⁵⁹ Bronfenbrenner, Urie; Morris, Pamela A. (2007). "The Bioecological Model of Human Development". *Handbook of Child Psychology*.

Figure 2-4: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework



Students with disabilities have historically been separated from the general education microsystem environment based on assumptions that they need a separate class to receive individualized instruction due their unique needs. Special education has been viewed as a different place, a room at the end of a hallway, a portable; it has been its own microsystem, where services can be centralized. A school commitment to inclusion as a basic right and an issue of social justice can inspire changes in school cultures and practices that lead to positive changes in society.

The classroom setting becomes a part of the ecosystem of each

student's life but is also an ecosystem unto itself. The dynamic interactions between students, educators, the family, and the school influence aspects of identity, a student's sense of belonging, as well as engagement in learning. Participation in general education settings disrupts established patterns of marginalization and improves long-term outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Hehir states, "the role of special education should be to minimize the impact of disability and maximize the opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in general education in their natural community".⁶⁰ Universal design for learning, cultural responsiveness, and MTSS are fundamental for creating equal opportunities and equity in education for all students however, additional environmental considerations may be needed for including students with disabilities to include the following:

Separate settings have resulted in social, cultural, and academic exclusion, which has perpetuated marginalization for students with disabilities at every level of the ecosystem.

- ❖ Community Centeredness
- ❖ Learner Centeredness
- ❖ Social and Emotional Learning and Behavior Support
- ❖ Curriculum and Assessment Alignment
- ❖ Adaptations: Accommodations and Modifications
- ❖ Technology Enhanced Environments
- ❖ Integrated Assistive Technology

⁶⁰ Hehir, T. (2005). *New directions in special education. Eliminating ableism in policy and practice*. Harvard Educational Press. Massachusetts (p. 49).

Community Centered Learning Environments

A community centered learning environment focuses on building community within the classroom and connecting students to communities and society outside of the classroom to create continuity between what they learn and the world, as demonstrated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model. The goals of a community centered learning environment extend beyond academic performance to include the development of the whole child, and the child's relationship with their family, peers, teachers, the school, and the community. Community centered classrooms also connect educators to each other for professional support, shared resources, ideas, and feedback. The following are characteristics of community centered classrooms:⁶¹

- Students experience congruity between the learning that happens in the classroom and other environments to include the school community, the home, and world beyond the school.
- Classroom culture honors and respects differences; fosters a sense of belonging for all students.
- The environment promotes students learning from each other, and honors individual growth and improvement.
- Norms and expectations related to homework, discussions, group work, and grading are culturally sensitive and responsive to different student backgrounds, learning styles, and stages of learning.
- Teachers present as learners and reflective practitioners within the classroom and with the school community.

Meaningful participation and membership in the learning community creates a sense of belonging, which comes from how students are treated, and the quality of their relationship with others. Student relationships take time to develop and are influenced by classroom culture. An inclusive culture communicates in a variety of ways that all students are important and fosters relationships, trust, compassion, and acceptance of differences.

Responsiveness to individual student differences takes willingness on behalf of educators to change and adapt teaching habits that might be a barrier to student learning. Educators need to be aware of how their teaching preferences, personal assumptions, and bias toward differences might influence student opportunities and outcomes. For example, a belief that families who live in poverty don't work hard enough, and a teaching preference for assigning daily homework, could lead to implicit bias toward students living in poverty who don't complete homework. However, recognizing how the circumstances put the student at a disadvantage, and offering a different option to get work accomplished at school, provides the student an opportunity to succeed. Bias can be unlearned through awareness and personal reflection. Instructional materials can be screened for bias.⁶² An inclusive classroom culture is a safe place for students to discuss bias and stereotyping openly, and where educators can be stewards of equity and justice in education. "Educational justice is when students don't have to conform to the status quo to feel successful, and when educators become adept at responding to student needs."⁶³

⁶¹ National Research Council. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

⁶² [Washington Model Resource: Screening for Biased Content in Instructional Materials](#)

⁶³ [Technology Access Foundation: J is for Justice](#)

BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities have traditionally been mainstreamed in general education classrooms intermittently, often with minimal learning expectations and limited or partial participation in the general education classroom community. It can be difficult for students with disabilities to experience full membership and meaningful participation in the general education setting when structural and philosophical barriers to inclusion exist. Table 2-2 below shows examples of barriers, conditions, and steps for removing such barriers related to low expectations. It highlights common barriers to meaningful participation for students with disabilities, the conditions of those barriers, and ways to eliminate barriers through collaborative teamwork.

Table 2-2: Removing Barriers to Meaningful Participation

Barriers	Conditions	Removal of Barriers to Meaningful Participation
Inconsistent attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student ‘visits’ to general education classroom are random and/or intermittent. • Entry and exit to setting does not correspond with natural breaks in class activities. • IEP goals are addressed in a setting separate from general education class or curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and monitor IEP goals in the general education setting. • Minimize transitions in and out of the setting. • Modify and adapt general education curriculum and instruction for student with disabilities.
Low expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning tasks are repetitive. • Learning goals are low level. • Goals don’t change over time. • Lack of learning challenge in goals/learning tasks. • Belief student cannot benefit from content. • Student failures cause them to lose hope in school and stop trying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presume competence and make least dangerous assumptions. • Set goals based on general education standards. • Ongoing review of progress and adjustment of goals/challenge. • Growth mindset.
Deficit view of student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on what students can’t do. • Fixed mindset is the belief that minds, and abilities cannot change. • Belief that learning/progress can only be made with intensive, one-to-one intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what students can do. • Recognize that all students have strengths and challenges. • Encourage reciprocal peer support and mentoring. • A focus on building capacity within student • Growth mindset - believe the mind/abilities can change. • Believe all students benefit from peer models and mentors.
Stigmatizing and Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biases based on disability when responding to disruptive behaviors. • Belief that problems reside in the child • View student as not fit or appropriate for inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make every student know and let them tell their story. • Foster understanding. • Listen in a variety of ways. • Celebrate accomplishments. • Look outside the student for possible causes to problems.

IDEA is a rights-based policy mandating that students with disabilities participate in the same curriculum and setting as students without disabilities to the greatest extent possible. That right extends beyond physical placement in a particular setting to meaningful participation and experiences alongside students without disabilities with support as needed. Students with disabilities need access to the same comprehensive standards-based education as students without disabilities. Special education is not a place where students go, but a service that follows and supports students with disabilities where they are so they can access learning and participate in general education.

EMBEDDED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES/SUPPORT

Welcoming students with disabilities into general education settings also involves welcoming the special education support that may be needed for that student to be successful. Students who have an IEP generally have a special education case manager who is responsible for designing and supervising specially designed instruction as documented in the IEP. The student's parent is also part of the IEP team and invested in the education and school experiences of their child. In addition, the student may have a full or part time paraeducator and specialists involved in the provision of special education services. A community centered environment will welcome the additional support a student may need and highlight that everyone needs help sometimes, because everyone has strengths and challenges. Coordinating classroom visits and team meetings involves a shared commitment to the student, flexible schedules, a record of data-based decision making, and the support of administration.

A strong relationship with peers in the general education setting can increase motivation and engagement in learning for students with disabilities and make them feel like a valued member of the community. A peer mentor can encourage positive work habits, give feedback on schoolwork, and help the student stay on task and participate. The peer mentor role should be voluntarily, and able to change upon request. Creating an inclusive environment requires that all peers learn to appreciate differences and learning variability. It is the educators who set the tone of acceptance and provide guidance for responding to each other respectfully and with compassion.

SCHOOLWIDE COMMITMENT

Building inclusive learning environments must be a schoolwide vision and mission to ensure all students with disabilities have opportunities to participate in general education settings *at every grade*. Many families of students with disabilities have also experienced being marginalized from the general education community and classroom. Educators must collaborate to build and sustain inclusive environments and be prepared to communicate the goals and positive outcomes of inclusion with all families to foster partnerships and confidence in the process. Educators can share examples of how flexibility, equity, and adaptations in the classroom meets the needs of all students, and welcome families to be part of the positive learning community. When students experience congruence between the inclusive classroom culture and a positive endorsement of that culture by their family, they will feel safer, more supported, and more engaged in school.

Learner Centered Environments

In traditional teacher-led school models, if students did not learn as the teacher directed, the focus was on the student's behavior, character, or impairment. Educators now recognize that learning and overall success in school depends upon the interaction between the environment, the educator, and the unique background and experiences of each student. A well-designed

environment that fosters overall growth provides stimulating materials, comfortable seating, and differentiated learning activities. When students feel comfortable and a sense of belonging, they can concentrate and engage more on learning tasks, retain more of the information presented, and enjoy the learning process. Learner centered environments are inclusive and responsive to student diversity, nurture positive social and cognitive development, and create multiple pathways to success. Characteristics of learner centered environments⁶⁴ are as follows:

- Students know their educators care about them because they feel recognized, understood, and connected through positive relationships.
- Educators bridge subject matter and individual student connections between the home and school.
- Educators respect and understand the prior experiences, knowledge, and interests of all students.
- Educators have sensitivity to the effect of dominant culture and practices on learning for students with diverse cultures and languages.
- Students are engaged in questioning, conversation, observations, and reflection.
- Activities facilitate transfer of knowledge across contexts.
- Learners construct their own meaning.

LEARNER VARIABILITY

Principles of universal design can help educators plan a learner centered environment that is responsive to student differences and avoids potential barriers to learning.⁶⁵ Some learners need to rely on a predictable routine to minimize anxiety, and others are more comfortable with change. Some learners need quiet to concentrate, and some can tune out noise and distraction. Some learners get overstimulated by high activity levels in class, and others can adapt. Some learners want to work alone, and others like working with groups. Some learners are self-directed, and others need frequent reminders and feedback to complete tasks. When learning environments allow for choice, and include multiple ways of engagement, students can take ownership of their learning, discover how they learn best, and develop self-awareness and self-determination.

Learner centered environments incorporate UDL principles of flexibility and choice into the environment and curriculum, which increases access to learning for a broad range of learners. *Flexibility* is when spaces and seating allow for collaboration and teamwork, but also a quiet area for students who prefer to work alone. *Choice* occurs when students don't want to hear the background music or conversation in the environment and are allowed to listen to music on their personal devices or use noise-cancelling headphones. Educators may not be able to remember the multiple preferences, needs and interests of each individual student, but when the environment and instruction are designed with choice and flexibility, all students can play a role in creating the best conditions for their own learning. Planning for learner variability is fundamental to creating a learner centered classroom at every grade and can begin prior to student arrival by implementing principles of UDL. Revisions to environments, curriculum and instruction can be made over time as

⁶⁴ National Research Council. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school: Expanded edition*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

⁶⁵ [CAST: The UDL Guidelines](#)

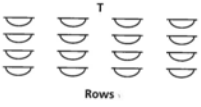
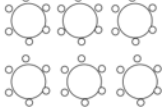
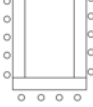
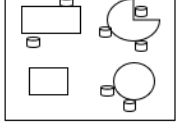
educators learn more about individual students.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexible learning environments are learner centered because they have variable room arrangements and furniture to support different styles of learning and classroom activities. The flexible arrangement of furniture and materials, as shown in this picture, engage the body and mind of students, as well as the senses when learning.⁶⁶ Stools can be integrated with comfortable chairs, and tables can be adaptable to allow for different seating positions. Students also benefit from variable groupings, and the opportunity to learn both independently and with peer models and mentoring. Figure 2-5 below shows flexible seating arrangements that align with instructional plans or activities. It is recommended that seating arrangements change regularly to facilitate a combination of independent and group work, and that students be involved in making changes to the room arrangement and be encouraged to advocate for their preferences for learning.



Figure 2-5: Flexible Seating Arrangements

<p>Individual separate desks facing the teacher desk for Independent work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test taking • Lecture • Presentations 	<p>Teacher desk alongside students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clusters / table groups • Group projects • Cooperative learning • Partner work 	<p>Desks arranged so students see each other, in circular or U-shaped patterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions • Class meeting 	<p>Combination-communally owned furniture, private study spaces, public shared spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed learning • project -based learning • Centers / stations
 <p>Rows</p>			

Learner centered environments are responsive to diverse activity levels, preferences, and styles of interaction with flexible seating arrangements and choice, but students with disabilities may need additional accommodations based on specific needs. An example might be resources that support sensory or self-regulation such as: a timer, seat cushion, adapted scissors, a standing desk, a black computer background, shaded glasses, a pencil grip, or fidgets. Such accommodations may be identified in an individualized education program (IEP) or provided based on student request or classroom observations. Such resources can also be made available to every student, as an element of flexible design to promote multiple means of engagement for all students, which can destigmatize the use of supplemental materials for improving concentration and learning.

STUDENT PROFILES

Specific information about the unique needs of students with disabilities can be gathered collaboratively by general and special educators, and families. The IEP present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) provides information on social, academic, and communication skills that can be used when designing general education curriculum, instruction, and environments. A student learning profile can be created to reference a summary of IEP goals,

⁶⁶ Dillon, R. (2019). *Why your classroom needs to be flexible–In more ways than one.* [DEMCO Interiors](#)

services, and accommodations for instructional planning. The profile can also highlight individual strengths, preferences, interests, and needs, and help plan UDL (see [Appendix 2-D](#)).

TRANSITIONS

A flexible learning environment is also flexible with the different types of support students with disabilities may need during transitions, and the time it might take them to acclimate to the general education classroom. Transitions can be a barrier to participation in general education when students enter late, leave early, or are removed for portions of the class. In addition, acclimating to the culture and patterns of the class can be difficult for students if most of their experience has been in a separate setting, or when impacted by their disabilities in areas such as sensory or communication. Sometimes the impact of a student's disability is not obvious in the general education setting, and their less-visible needs and challenges can be overlooked. Students whose disability causes more externalized behaviors may need extra support to help them feel safe and comfortable in order to learn, and to minimize distractions to the learning of others. Collaborative teaming is essential for identifying barriers to accessing the environment, eliminate or minimize those barriers, and plan for inclusion that is positive for everyone. Educators can explore with the student, family, and others the needs of the student, and to create conditions that help the student acclimate, feel safe, and understand expectations.

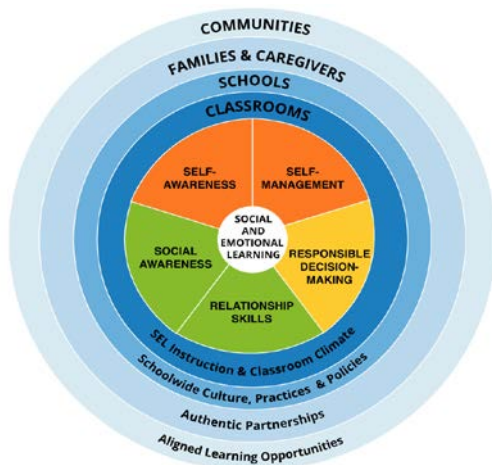
Transitions in and out of a general education classroom can cause stress for students with disabilities, and distraction from learning for the student and others. Successful transitions in and out of the general education classroom, and within class, can be supported in the following ways:

- To the greatest extent possible, include the student in all routines within the general education learning environment to include entering and exiting class transitions.
- When it is not possible to include the student in all of the class transitions, identify an ideal time to enter or exit that coincides with a naturally-occurring transition within the class period.
- If necessary, use transition cards, reinforcements, a peer or paraeducator for cueing, or a visual schedule to help the student predict and follow along with transition expectations. Practice those routines with the student.
- Develop a classroom transition plan that identifies barriers, sets goals for participation, and tracks progress. A classroom transition plan might include pre-visits to the room when students are gone, desk assignment, a backpack with tasks and materials for when the student is done with work or a break is needed.
- Consider the best routine for transitioning to a desk. Consider the student's needs when determining seating. It is sometimes helpful to have the student with disabilities close to the lead teacher, where they can receive direct cues and reinforcement, and to help focus attention. However, it might be best for some students to be seated near the door, where they can enter and exit more easily, and can see everything that is happening in the room, become familiar with routines, watch the responses and behaviors of peers, and be less distracting to other students.

Social-Emotional Learning and Behavior Supports

A flexible, adaptable, culturally responsive, and engaging learning community can lead to enhanced learning for many students, but social and emotional well-being is another significant factor that can impact learning. The development of social competence is directly linked with social

Figure 2-6: Social Emotional



and emotional well-being and has a significant impact on school success. Social competence is the ability to form healthy relationships and regulate behaviors that are central to well-being. Social and emotional learning that leads to competence happens across the lifespan incidentally, through personal experiences, and directly through coaching and curriculum (see Figure 2-6). Social competence is influenced by an individual's ecosystem, biological factors such as resilience, temperament, personality, relationships, contexts, and culture. Educators can find research and resources for implementing social and emotional learning curriculum at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)⁶⁷ and on the OSPI website.⁶⁸

Embedding social and emotional learning (SEL) across grades for all students can help disrupt inequities, bridge cultures, and contribute to a safe learning community.⁶⁹ Elements of SEL and that lead to social competence are described by CASEL (figure x) to include; research-based strategies for self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The following are brief descriptions of these elements and the curriculum focus for ALL students, to be tailored as appropriate across grades in the following areas: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. A description of each, along with curriculum focus areas for students can be found in [Appendix 2-E](#).

SELF-AWARENESS: The ability to understand how one's personal emotions, thoughts, and values influence their behaviors, and are aware of their own strengths and limitations.

Focus for students:

- Identify personal and cultural assets.
- Explore the link between feelings, values, thoughts, and actions.
- Examine personal biases.
- Maintain a growth mindset and cultivate strengths.
- Practice positive visualizations, affirmations, relaxation / meditation.

SELF-MANAGEMENT: The ability to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, use stress-management strategies, plan and execute goals, organize time and tasks, and demonstrate self-determination.

⁶⁷ [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

⁶⁸ [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Social and Emotional Learning](#)

⁶⁹ [Teaching Tolerance](#)

Focus for students:

- Practice stress management strategies.
- Use tools for planning and organization.
- Set goals and steps toward achieving goals.
- Celebrate small and big successes.
- Monitoring and regulating emotions.

SOCIAL AWARENESS: The ability to recognize social and cultural norms, listen to and consider different perspectives, and have an awareness of how diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts influence perspectives, thoughts, and feelings. Also, the ability to recognize and appropriately respond to the emotions of others and show empathy and compassion toward adversity.

Focus for students:

- Practices skills for community building: talk about the feelings and perspectives of others, demonstrate acts of compassion, express gratitude.
- Foster awareness of norms of society and different cultures.
- Provide time and opportunities for students to get to know each other, reduce stereotypes, and improve attitudes toward diversity.
- Have students create classroom rules of conduct and identify positive / appreciated behaviors.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships and effectively communicate and collaborate with diverse individuals and groups.

Focus for students:

- Acknowledge the strengths and positive qualities in others.
- Practice the art of listening, dialogue, and negotiation.
- Engage in respectful problem solving and conflict resolution.
- Practice collaborative decision-making and teamwork.
- Take different roles in cooperative and project-based learning.
- Show appreciation for different ways of being and doing things.

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: The ability to make thoughtful, caring, and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Focus for students:

- Explore the value of ethics and safety for the benefit of others and the community.
- Evaluate the benefits and consequences of actions on others.
- Practice open-mindedness to possible solutions for personal and social problems.
- Use logic, critical thinking, and reasoning when analyzing and interpreting events, facts, and the interactions with others.

The best way to support the social and emotional development of students is to maintain a safe and positive learning environment. A positive learning environment fosters positive emotions, which improve attention, memory, motivation, and social interactions. If a student is struggling with social skills, emotional regulation, or managing behaviors, it is important to consider how the interactive roles within the environment might be contributing to the challenges the student is experiencing. Students who are affected by adversity may lack the social and emotional resilience to cope with stress or trauma. A positive relationship between the student and the teacher is foundational for the student to feel safe communicating thoughts and feelings. Preventing negative student experiences and behaviors involves maintaining awareness of the emotional states of students, practicing compassion and empathy for understanding the student's perspective, and providing positive feedback and specific praise. When students experience challenges related to social and emotional well-being, collaboration between general and special educators, support staff, specialists, and families will be essential for understanding how the environment can support the student in getting what they need. Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) can provide tiered interventions as needed for social and emotional learning and behavior support within classrooms and throughout the school to ensure access to general education for all students.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

To the greatest extent possible, the best setting to develop social competence is alongside students without disabilities in contexts where they can observe positive interactions and participate in a culture of learning and community. It is in the general education classroom that all students develop social and cultural capital, which is an understanding of the social norms, patterns of behavior, knowledge, and trends of same age peers. Students with behavior disorders have traditionally been segregated from general education due to maladaptive behaviors and are at high risk of dropping out of high school, even when they have the potential to achieve in the standard curriculum. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)⁷⁰ can help students with behaviors remain in general education classrooms where they can access curriculum and develop peer relationships (refer to Figure 2-3). The MTSS model provides tiered interventions with leveled support in general education settings and builds a culture of collaboration among educators to implement research-based strategies for increasing the variety and intensity of interventions. Special education services and goals can also be incorporated at each tier along with other learning goals,⁷¹ and progress monitoring of interventions for all students can inform curriculum and instructional changes.

Research-based strategies for including students with disabilities in general education environments are outlined in High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Environments⁷² to include:

- Define specific behaviors for meeting classroom expectations and following rules.
- Develop consistent and predictable classroom procedures and explicitly teach and practice.
- Display rules and procedures in writing and with visuals.

⁷⁰ [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: MTSS](#)

⁷¹ TIES Center and National Center on Education Outcomes. (January 2019). [MTSS for All: Including Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#).

⁷² McLeskey, J, Maheady, L, Billingsley, B. Brownell, M.T., Lewis, T.J. (2019). Council for Exceptional Children. Routledge, NY.

- Develop a hierarchy of response strategies to provide feedback and alternatives for misbehavior.
- Provide verbal, gestural, and physical prompts and reminders of target behaviors.

Early childhood is a critical time to begin social and emotional learning. It is in early childhood that awareness and self-regulation of emotion begins through play and interactions with children and adults. Young children with disabilities need experiences with typical peers as models of language and behaviors conducive to building relationships and working with groups. The Pyramid Model is a framework for promoting social and emotional development in infants and young children.⁷³

Standards and Assessment Alignment



A standards and assessment centered learning environment aligns curriculum, instruction, and learning goals with content standards and assessments, to ensure congruence between what is taught and what is measured. **Learning standards** define what students at each grade level should learn in reading, math, science, and

other areas as determined by states. **Formative assessments** provide ongoing feedback on student learning and teaching effectiveness. They are tailored to the student and flexible as student performance changes over time. **Summative assessments** are a finite sampling of student understanding on learning goals at the end of units, at the end of the school year, or on standardized tests. They measure outcomes, but they are limited in showing what students know and can do beyond a narrow set of test items.

Learning and assessment are inseparable. Learning occurs through engagement and is both conceptual and procedural. Assessment is described as, "the process of gathering information about a learner's performance to make educational decisions".⁷⁴ It is through assessment of learning that teachers can adapt and revise instruction, and students can recognize and correct error patterns or misunderstandings. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework focuses on the removal of barriers and improving access to curriculum and assessments for all students by allowing choice and flexibility. Assessment options allow students to demonstrate what they understand and can do using a variety of tools and formats. When designing assessments for the classroom, consider the following UDL tips for assessment:⁷⁵

- Ensure the learning goal is clearly understood by the student.
- Create developmentally appropriate tasks and timelines.
- Identify multiple resources for organizing information: tools, lecture outlines, charts, learning logs, journals, and graphic organizers that support the concept or skill.
- Motivate engagement by connecting with background knowledge, providing a clear path, creating scaffolds, modeling skills, and giving choice about what to work on.

⁷³ [NCPMI. Pyramid Model Basic Overview](#)

⁷⁴ Salvia, J., Ysseldyke, J. & Witmer, S. (2009). *Assessment: In Special and Inclusive Education*. (11th Ed). Wadsworth Cengage Learning. Belmont, CA.

⁷⁵ [CAST: UDL Tips for Assessment](#)

- Utilize peers as models, coaches, and mentors to demonstrate skills and provide encouragement.
- Encourage students to self-monitor strengths and growth and use meta-cognition strategies.
- Vary options for communication such as written, spoken, recorded, drawn, manipulated objects, pointing, computer-assisted dialogue or storyboards, and process of elimination.

Students with disabilities have historically been marginalized from both general education curriculum and assessments. A separate system of education and a lack of opportunities to participate in the general education environment have been barriers to learning the general education curriculum. *Inclusionary practices ensure students with disabilities are part of the alignment between what is taught and what is assessed in the general education setting.* UDL supports meaningful participation in standards-based curriculum and assessments for students with disabilities, but additional strategies and flexibilities are often needed. Some students will need specially designed instruction in reading, writing or math, while others may need support in mobility, social skills, or self-regulation. Meaningful participation and progress in quality core instruction can be monitored using a variety of methods such as observation, anecdotal notes, work samples, and classroom assessments. Information on student progress in quality core instruction allows co-teachers and collaborative teams to identify barriers and provide students with extra support or more targeted interventions as needed in a tiered MTSS model.

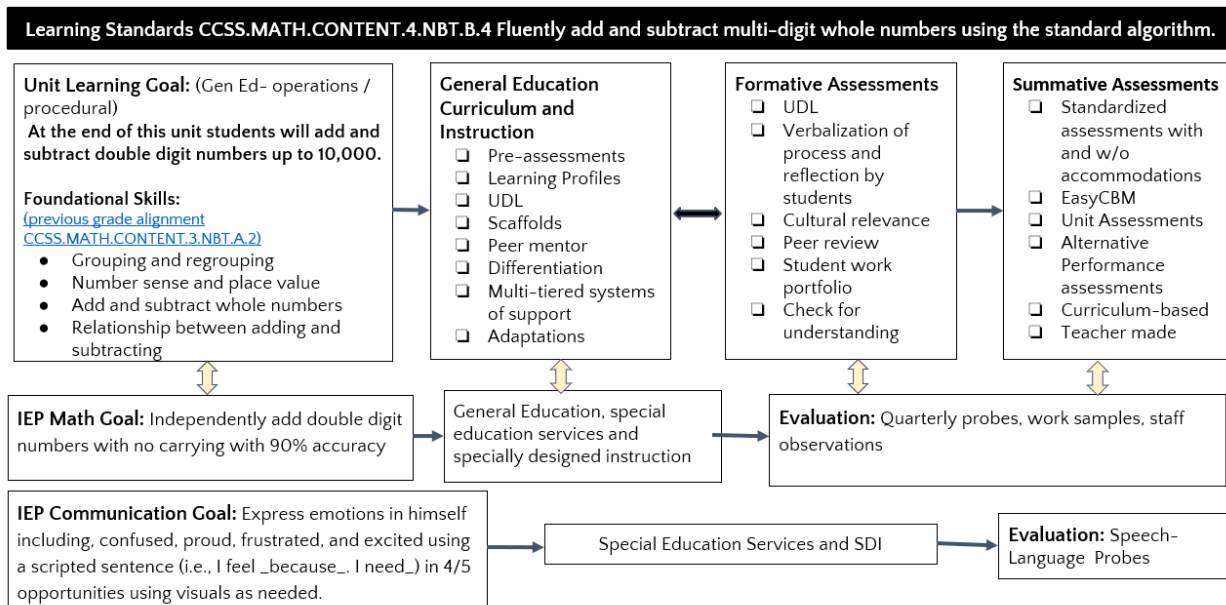
CLEAR GOALS. Clear learning goals are essential to clear assessment design. The assessment design should include ways in which students can demonstrate mastery of a goal, and ways to prevent barriers in the assessment. If the goal is *to identify all U.S. state capitals*, the verb (identify) does not specify how it will be demonstrated in an assessment, and there can be multiple ways students can demonstrate learning in relation to the verb, (point, match, circle, etc.). In addition, a differentiated learning goal may be needed for students with disabilities to reduce the difficulty or cognitive demand (maybe 10 state capitals instead of 50). A modified learning goal can facilitate progress related to the learning goal in a way that is both challenging and reasonable considering the circumstances of their disability. Specially designed instruction and parallel systems of data collection related to IEP goals can be embedded into the lesson within the general education context with collaborative planning and co-teaching.

MAPPING ALIGNMENT. All students with disabilities are general education students first and need opportunities to learn the general education curriculum, as they too will be demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the standards on the standardized state assessment. Meaningful participation in standards-based assessments for students with disabilities depends on opportunities to participate in the general education curriculum with accommodations and modifications as needed. Recognizing and understanding barriers, gaps in knowledge and skill, and ensuring access to general education curriculum and assessments requires ongoing vigilance and teamwork. An alignment map for general education settings can help maintain connection and continuity for students with disabilities who need both access to general education curriculum and special education services to support and monitor IEP goals.

The alignment map in figure 2-8 below shows a general education 4th grade math learning objective and an IEP math goal, each based on a 4th grade level math standard. This example includes a reference to third grade and identifies foundational skills related to the goal in the standards progression. The map also shows an IEP objective not directly related to a learning

standard, but essential in the overall social and academic functioning. The map structure shows how general education and IEP goals can be aligned with general education standards, instruction, and assessment in the general education settings. The student with disabilities benefits from both general education instruction and special education services in the general education context. A blank alignment map template can be found in [Appendix 2-F](#).

Figure 2-8. Alignment Map: General Education Grade 4



EQUAL ACCESS. Assessments need to be accessible and equitable with materials and procedures designed with sensitivity to differences such as culture, ability, and language. Accommodations to the assessment materials or procedures can allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.⁷⁶ Additionally, ensuring assessments are culturally responsive can include screening assessment questions and materials to confirm they reflect the identity and experiences of those taking the assessment.⁷⁷ Guidance on assessments for students who experience disability and are English language learners is provided by National Center on Education Outcomes.⁷⁸

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS. Students experiencing significant cognitive disabilities who are not able to demonstrate achievement on standardized assessments, even with accommodations, can take an alternate assessment for measuring progress toward general education standards. Alternate assessments consist of a subset of the same standards-based achievement test taken by general education students. *Although the test items are reduced, students who take an alternate assessment must still have access to a comprehensive standards-based curriculum with appropriate challenge in the least restrictive environment.* It should not be assumed that students who take an alternate assessment need to be educated in a separate setting.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ [Guidelines for Tools, Supports, and Accommodations \(GTSA\)](#)

⁷⁷ [Equity and Assessment: Moving Towards Culturally Responsive Assessment](#) The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

⁷⁸ National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). (2019). [Guidance Manuals for Educators of English Learners with Disabilities: Ideas and Lessons from the Field](#)

⁷⁹ [TIES Brief #2 May 2019](#)

Activity: Alignment Reflection

When working collaboratively with a team to plan a unit and corresponding assessments, consider four questions proposed by Richard Dufour et al.⁸⁰ To ensure the learning target/goal is aligned with instruction and what is being measured, consider:

1. What do we want our students to learn? (*concepts, content, scope, and sequence*)
2. How will we know if each student has learned it? (*What assessments do you and/or your team use to determine proficiency?*)
3. How will we respond when some students have not learned it? (*Accommodations, modifications, instructional strategies, individualized supports, etc.*)
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency? (*Extended learning, increased complexity and challenge*)

Adaptations: Accommodations and Modifications

Every student experiences barriers to learning something at some time, which can be an element of the environment, curriculum, instruction, or student background, language difference, or disability. Identifying barriers is a critical step in ensuring access and equity in education. Adaptations can help mediate barriers and are an essential aspect of inclusionary practices. An adaptation is a change to the general education environment, curriculum, or assessment in response to the unique needs of individual students. Both accommodations and modifications are adaptations (changes), but they differ in the types of changes made for individual students in relation to general education expectations. Accommodations and modifications that are written in the IEP must be implemented as directed across placement settings.

Both accommodations and modifications are adaptations (changes), but they differ in the types of changes made for individual students in relation to general education expectations.

An **accommodation** changes *how the student is taught* but NOT the learning objective. Accommodations count toward meeting grade level expectations, but some students may need alternate ways to engage and demonstrate learning and proficiency. Examples include increased instructional time, added materials, peer tutoring, preferred seating, templates, note-taking guides, shortened assignments, extra time, rewards, highlighted text, and/or manipulatives.

A **modification** changes *what is taught*, and the learning objective is different from the grade level expectation. When making modifications, subject matter and content remain the same, but the expectation is different based on the student's skills and abilities.

Changes may be to the level of difficulty, the targeted goal, or the assessment. Modifications are common when a student is two or more grade levels below their peers in academics or other areas of development and receiving special education services. Incidentally, a student's need for modifications in a general education setting cannot be the sole reason for placement in a more restrictive setting.⁸¹

Accommodations and modifications can be on an IEP for a student with disabilities or developed in the context of the learning environment and expectations. Table 2-3 provides examples of

⁸⁰ Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R. Many, T., Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. (3rd Ed.) Solution Tree Press. Bloomington IN.

⁸¹ [IDEA Regulation 300.116e](#)

curriculum accommodations and modifications that allow students to participate in the same assignments as other students. Accommodations maintain criteria related to the learning goal or assessment with optional means of participation. Modifications do not match criteria of the learning goal or assessment but allow students to participate in the same learning with individualized goals.

Table 2-3: Examples of Adaptations

ADAPTATIONS	
Accommodations	Modifications
<p>Goal: Assignment to independently solve 20 mixed fraction problems</p> <p>Accommodation: Student can do the math operation but gets frustrated easily. He needs <u>extra time</u> to complete each problem, and a <u>reduction</u> of the number of problems, but the student is demonstrating proficiency in relation to the goal.</p>	<p>Goal: Assignment to independently solve 20 mixed fraction problems</p> <p>Modification: Student identifies fractions on a page by circling them in comparison to whole numbers. The expectation and goal of the assignment is different.</p>
<p>Goal: To label 50 states by writing the names on a paper map with a pen.</p> <p>Accommodation: Student is given the same map as peers but with <u>alternate means</u> – pre-printed labels to place on states rather than produce written responses. Writing is a challenge, but she is demonstrating proficiency in relation to the goal.</p>	<p>Goal: To label 50 states by writing the names on a paper map with a pen.</p> <p>Modification: Student is given same map, but the states are in different colors, and state labels are color coded to match the state colors. The goal has changed to matching colors (with labeling practice embedded).</p>

The need for ongoing adaptations (accommodation or modifications) is essential as an inclusive practice to address learning barriers as they arise. Creative methods and materials can support students with tracking assignments, orienting to relevant details in a lesson, organizing tasks, etc. (see examples at Go-To Visual Support Kit).⁸² Well-designed adaptations facilitate social and academic participation, promote independence, are developmentally and culturally appropriate, focus on student success rather than deficits, and are easy to use.⁸³ Also, the integration of adaptations as a classroom practice and element of UDL, available to any student who needs them, can change negative perceptions of difference based on unique characteristics of particular students, to being an element of flexibility and a strategy to enhance equity and access for all.

Classroom observations provide valuable information about student performance and participation in general education and are an essential practice to support inclusion. Observations are a type of ethnographic method of gathering observable and measurable data on students. Classroom observations and student data can help identify barriers to learning by seeing what is hard for the student in relation to an instructional objective or assessment in the learning context. Data from observations can be communicated to the IEP team, facilitate problem solving and collaboration, and allow for monitoring of progress both in general education and on IEP goals. Classroom observations of a student with disabilities are typically done by the educator or specialist who is responsible for developing specially designed instruction across learning *environments*. The

⁸² [Go-To Visual Support Kit](#)

⁸³ Kurth, J. A., & Keegan, L. (2014). Development and use of curricular adaptations for students receiving special education service. *Journal of Special Education, 48*, 191–203.

observation can be of performance on embedded IEP goals or of the student’s ability to access the general education curriculum, instruction, and/or environment. An environmental observation looks at the fit between what a student can do in relation to what is expected of a lesson objective or assessment. Observations that look at multiple dimensions of learning acknowledge that *participation is more than academic*. A whole-child view includes any aspects of learning and can be a barrier or strength. Observations allow collaborative teams to develop adaptations that are relevant to the expectations in the context of a lesson or assessment.

Case Study: Billy

Table 2-4 below describes an observation of a 2nd grade student with disabilities in a general education setting during a spelling test. His reading and writing skills are at a kindergarten level. The student can read some CVC sight words, knows the alphabet, and writes the letters of his name. This student needed modifications in three of the four areas of functioning observed. He was not able to demonstrate the cognitive skills or knowledge expected, so modifications are suggested, and his learning goal will be different (modified). If the student could spell the words but struggled with self-regulation or the physical act of writing, an accommodation may be needed instead. This template can be applied to any learning environment, including online learning, and could even be completed by the student as a means of self-awareness and self-advocacy. A blank template of this table can be found in [Appendix 2-G](#).

Table 2-4: Classroom Observation Template for Billy

2nd grade spelling test expectations ↓	Student’s Strengths	What’s hard? (Student’s challenges)	Suggested Adaptations: Accommodation or Modification
Social - quiet or silent voice, working individually, eyes on own work.	Able to engage in task quietly, complete the work individually and kept eyes on own work.		None
Self-regulation - stay in seat, wait for word, write it down, wait for next word.	Stays in seat but active, asks to use pencil sharpener, not following wait and respond routine.	Quiet and watching others while the teacher reads words. 8 out of 10 words included scribbles instead of writing letters or words.	Modification: have words written in order on the paper and have student circle the first letter on each line as words are read aloud (to practice wait and respond).
Cognitive - writing letters and words, remember spelling or decode.	Demonstrated proper letter formation for letters attempted.	Not writing words or parts of words or reading or spelling aloud. Does not initiate attempts to write, spell, or decode.	Modification: List all spelling words on paper or an iPad in order and have student highlight the word said aloud based on the first letter heard or other clues.
Physical - use pencil to write letters and words on lines, hold paper with other hand, skip lines for next word.	Holds a pencil to scribble on lines in random places. Holds the paper with the alternate hand when drawing.	Makes marks / scribbles on some lines but does not write words or letters sequences with the pencil.	Modification: Pre-write spelling words on paper in highlighter and have student trace over the letters as teacher says the word.

Technology Enhanced Environments

The term technology enhanced classroom (TEC) refers to a classroom that uses technology to strengthen instruction, increase student engagement, and put tools of technology in the hands of students. Technology supports are an essential feature of UDL to expand ways students can engage and participate in general education.⁸⁴ The digital age depends on the ability to use technology tools in efficient and creative ways but requires users to be self-directed and take ownership of the learning process. In 21st-century technology enhanced learning environments, the teacher is an expert facilitator of others' knowing.⁸⁵

Adopting and integrating technology tools and practices in school is essential to enable all students to learn and live in the digital age. International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards emphasize how technology can be used to amplify and transform learning and teaching, and empower connected learners in a connected world.⁸⁶ Technology enables learners to pursue their interests, direct their own learning, work at their own pace, and customize their own schedule. Technology also allows educators to provide immediate feedback to students, and create various ways to build knowledge, practice, and demonstrate understanding.



Technology enhanced classrooms make the use of digital tools commonplace and acceptable. The integration of technology tools for all learners can help reduce the stigmatization that can occur when students with disabilities need assistive technology to access curriculum, participate in the general education setting, and to communicate the most basic needs. In addition, when students with disabilities are included in a general education setting where technology is infused, they are prepared alongside their peers for the digital world that is awaiting them when they graduate. To learn more about the future of learning with technology, visit the Center on Inclusive Technology and Education Systems.⁸⁷

When determining technology tools for instruction and student engagement, it is important to consider learner variability and accessibility.⁸⁸ Accessible technology tools and materials ensure that students are not left out or left behind due to lack of access to the learning tools.⁸⁹ For example, writing is an important learning standard and a critical form of communication, but for some students handwriting can be difficult and a barrier to the development of writing skills. Technology makes writing accessible when handwriting is difficult by eliminating the barrier and providing a word processor and keyboard, as well as speech to text as needed.

When deciding what tool is best for individual students, first consider the learning goal. Rather than ask, what can students do with this tablet, consider what is hard and what tools or strategies are motivating to engage the students. For example, what is needed for a student who can't read at grade level, has a hearing impairment, lacks background knowledge, has limited vocabulary, or needs a system to help regulate breaks. A single technology device can have a variety of uses in the classroom. The following are three ways one device, such as a tablet, can be used to support the

⁸⁴ [ISTE 30+ \(tech\) Tools for Diverse Learners](#)

⁸⁵ Stemberge, A. (2020) Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom: An Equity Framework for Pedagogy, p. 53

⁸⁶ [OSPI 2018 Educational Technology Standards](#)

⁸⁷ [Framing the Future of Learning with Technology. Center on Inclusive Technology & Education Systems \(CITES\)](#)


⁸⁸ [University of Washington: Accessible Technology](#)

⁸⁹ [CAST: National Center on Accessible Educational Materials](#)

diverse needs of students in the classroom (see Table 2-5):

1. To support UDL practices that enhance access and learning for all students;
2. As a means of providing accommodations and modifications; and
3. As an assistive device that facilitates participation in all aspects of school for individuals with significant disabilities.

Table 2-5: Different Uses for the Same Technology Device

<p>Tablet Universal Design features</p>	<p>Tablet Accommodation or Modification</p>	<p>Tablet Assistive Technology</p>
		
<p>Universal features enhance learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Speech to text ● Text to speech ● Touchscreen ● Keyboard ● Personalized learning ● Learning apps ● Closed caption ● Audio books ● Internet ● Scanning ● photos/ video ● Access Google Suite ● Learning games ● Student collaboration ● Tutorials ● Spell check 	<p>Universal plus learning support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dictation ● Audio feedback ● Word prediction ● Apps for spelling ● Apps for math ● Apps for reading ● Apps for writing ● Timer ● High/low contrast ● Touch screen choice making ● Headphone jack ● Enlarged text/image ● Note taking ● Google Translate ● Digital books 	<p>Universal, learning support, and functional support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apps for communication ● Matching, tracking, and tracing apps for visually impaired ● Digitally stored scanned files for visually impaired ● Magnification ● Digital storybook ● Highlighting ● Ebook reader ● Apps for making text accessible ● Ibookstore for uploading pdf text and images ● Switch controls

Technology enhanced classrooms are well positioned for streamlining communication with students and families, and online learning options. Communication with students and families is essential for maintaining reciprocal exchanges and being responsive, regardless of the learning environment. A shared virtual space such as a digital classroom platform allows both students and families to find information on the current curriculum, assignments, and events. Information on a shared site can also be pasted into a translation program for students and families who are English language learners. More on technology tools and platforms can be found at the Washington State Special Education Technology Center (SETC).⁹⁰

Online Learning Environment

An online environment allows for innovations in teaching and learning and has the potential to transform the traditional system of education designed to teach students of a particular grade to learn the same content, at the same rate, and often in the same way. Traditional systems of

⁹⁰ [Special Education Technology Center \(SETC\)](#)

education designed for the average student have not been effective for all students, particularly underrepresented students, and students with disabilities.⁹¹ In the book *The End of Average*, Todd Rose debunks the myth of an average student, and points out that every individual has a jagged, or unique, learning profile.⁹² The jagged profile illustrates learner variability as the norm in classrooms, and require varied and flexible teaching strategies to engage all students. Universal design for learning is a framework for flexible instructional design for variable learners in both face to face and online environments. Online learning allows students to access content in a variety of ways, whenever they want, and at their own pace. Equal opportunity for learning online depends upon equitable access and engagement with technology tools as follows:

- **Access:** internet connectivity, technology devices and equipment, readiness for using and teaching with tools effectively, and family support. A lack of access to technological devices or limited bandwidth to support online instruction are barriers to participating in online environments.
- **Accessibility is usability:** learning materials, documents, and links can be retrieved as needed by all users.

A team will need to identify barriers to participation for students with disabilities and may need to find alternate ways for the student to participate such as breaks, predictable schedules, choices, and more frequent feedback. Families will need clear guidance on what is expected of their child in online learning, their role in providing support, and how to get technical help when needed.⁹³ A personalized online learning environment for students can be customized by and for individual students, as a way to support a student-centered and student-driven learning experience. An online portfolio can include individual interests and resources, as well as documentation of learning over time to be referenced and shared with teachers and families.

Table 2-6: Examples of UDL in Online Learning Environments

UDL in Online Learning	Examples of on tools and activities:
Platforms and online tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms: Google classroom; Google suite (forms, docs, slides, polls etc); Class DoJo, Schoology, Seesaw, Microsoft Teams, Canvas • Tools: Screencastify; Edpuzzle; Quizlet; Webpaint, Flipgrid, Boom cards
Multiple means of recognition and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screenshot document, textbook, or curriculum material • Green screen a setting related to a lesson • PowerPoint embedded into a live presentation and uploaded to a platform • Teacher-made explanatory video to model problem solving and correct answers • Screencastify to talk over PowerPoint or doc, download and record video • Online calculator for math calculations • Break out rooms for student group work • Embed content available online (video and activities) • Video modeling of community and vocational tasks for transition age students
Multiple means of assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google forms quiz option • Take screenshots and insert image with questions • Add corrective feedback • Assign points in Google Classroom • Edpuzzle with embedded questions for students to answer and automatic grading

⁹¹ Zhao, Y. (2018). *What works may hurt: Side effects in education*. Teachers College Press

⁹² Rose, T. (2016). *The end of average: How we succeed in a world that values sameness*. New York, NY: HarperOne.

⁹³ [Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities: Recommendations for Parent Engagement](#)

There are many benefits to online learning for students with and without disabilities. Recognizing and addressing barriers for students with disabilities is essential for ensuring equity and access.⁹⁴ Families are essential partners in ensuring access and monitoring participation for students with disabilities in online learning environments. Students who experience physical disabilities may need assistance with positioning and may need assistive technology to access learning and engage in communication. Accessibility for students with sensory needs such as vision, auditory, and sensory processing are often overlooked when considering the range of learner variability with online learning.⁹⁵ WAVE is a website that can evaluate and select accessible websites and online resources for accessibility.⁹⁶

Integrating opportunities to use technology is especially important for students who do not have opportunities to use such tools at home. A digital divide is perpetuated by inequitable opportunities to access technology tools, and school is a place where this can be mediated, and opportunities made equitable. However, with these opportunities comes responsibility for all students to care for equipment, practice good etiquette, and use critical thinking and good judgement when using the internet to avoid internet scams and cyber-bullying. Educators need plans in place to manage how and when students use the tools. A guide for educators to prepare students for safe and ethical use of technology can be taught using the Digital Citizenship curriculum⁹⁷ to include:

- Using technology to make your community better.
- Engaging respectfully online with people who have different beliefs than you.
- Using technology to make your voice heard by public leaders and to shape public policy.
- Determining the validity of online sources of information.

Activity: Video Reflection

Watch and reflect on the TED Talk Video by Todd Rose, called "[The Myth of Average](#)" with Todd Rose.⁹⁸ After watching the video, reflect on the following questions:

- In your experience, does education focus on the same set of rules and expectations for all students to achieve mastery, or are students given multiple pathways or options for achieving an outcome?
- How do you think the 'jagged profile' view of learners might impact teaching practices, learning outcomes, and student experiences in school?

Integrated Assistive Technology

When a student requires a specific type of technology in order to make progress on goals and have access to the curriculum, that specific technology is referred to as assistive technology (AT). AT is a tool and a special education service necessary for ongoing access and meaningful participation across environments for people with significant disabilities who need tools to learn, communicate,

⁹⁴ [Equity Matters, 2016. Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities](#)

⁹⁵ Basham, J. D., Smith, S. J., & Satter, A. L. (2016b). [Universal Design for Learning: Scanning for alignment in K-12 blended and fully online learning materials](#). *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 31, 147-155.

⁹⁶ [WAVE Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#)

⁹⁷ [ISTE Digital Citizenship in Education](#)

⁹⁸ [The Myth of Average. Todd Rose at TEDx Sonoma County \(18:26\)](#)

and form relationships. If such tools are not available to those who need them, it limits functioning and participation across environments. For instance, text to speech is useful for people who want to listen to something while driving or with headphones, but is not necessary for functioning in daily life, but when it is essential for daily functioning, it's assistive technology.

The integration of assistive technology into the general education setting allows students with significant disabilities the means to participate and complete schoolwork with increased independence. AT can be low-tech, such a cane, specialized pen grips, or printed picture communication system. More advanced AT can include a hearing aid, or wheelchair. High-tech assistive technology can include computers, tablets, switches, and software for reading, writing, math, and communication. AT is essential when the IEP team determines it is necessary for daily functioning, participation in general education, and/or communication across settings. AT is not an activity or added feature in school to use on occasion when available (Table 2-7).



Table 2-7: Examples and Non-Examples of Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive Technology is:	Assistive Technology is not:
An iPad with educational programs specifically selected to meet the needs of a student, and used in all settings, with results and progress monitored	An iPad with generic educational programs that is provided to any students in the classroom, and used during instructional down-time
A communication device used by a student in all instructional settings and at home and supported by all providers and family / caregivers.	A communication device used by a student with disabilities in a separate classroom, or with SLP.
A communication board or system customized for a nonverbal student to use across settings.	A large communication board used by the general or special educator to support increased communication for any or all students.
A slant board used by a student in all environments for academic and functional tasks, supported by all providers and family/caregivers	A slant board used only when coloring pictures, and supported by the classroom aid Positioning devices for all students such as flexible or standing seats

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is the use of symbols, aids, strategies, and techniques to enhance or enable communication. This includes sign language, communication boards, and both manual and electronic devices to help those who cannot articulate sounds and express thoughts and ideas with spoken language. AT and AAC are essential tools that enable students with significant disabilities to access general education, make progress on IEP goals, and develop communication and life skills. "The inclusive class is also the place with the most potential for supporting students to use all their communicative modes, including their AAC devices, because of the number of opportunities to practice communication".⁹⁹

⁹⁹ [TIES Tip#4 Successfully Using Communication Practices in the Inclusive Class](#)

Students with complex communication needs often have had limited opportunities to participate in general education settings due to the intensity of support needed with and without assistive technology. Inclusionary practices that support students with significant communication disabilities in the least restrictive environment also support an array of communication forms, methods, and systems from low tech (vocabulary cards, gestures, and picture-symbol communication systems) to high tech (speech generating device). Effective use of devices to both facilitate communication and access general education depends on the right match of tools and systems for the student. The knowledge and skills of communication partners in understanding how to use devices as directed are critical, as well as knowing the communication strengths and needs of each student.



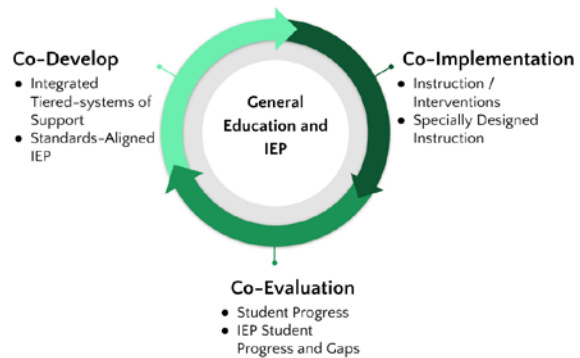
The process of matching assistive technology tools for students with disabilities begins with identifying the needs outlined on the IEP through an Assistive Technology Considerations Process.¹⁰⁰ Collaboration between the special education and general education teacher is vital for assistive technology to be implemented successfully. The SETT framework developed by Joy Smiley Zabala ensures teams have a shared understanding of implementation plans for using and integrating AT and AAC. The SETT acronym stands for documentation related to: Student, Environments, Tasks and Tools (SETT). Table 2-8 shows the 4-step SETT inquiry process for routine documentation and problem solving. SETT is described by Zabala as, "...a flexible tool that makes concerns, identification, and solution-seeking processes accessible to all and is useful in all phases of decision-making and service delivery.

¹⁰⁰ SETC Assistive Technology Process

Table 2-8: SETT Framework for Selecting and Monitoring AT Use

SETT: Framework Components		8-step decision making process
<p>Student - The person who is the central focus of the process.</p>	<p>What is the functional area(s) of concern? What does the student need to be able to do what seems difficult or impossible at this time?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify areas of concern 2. Gather information on aspects related to concerns 3. Analyze information 4. Generate and prioritize potential solutions 5. Develop a plan for being actively involved in learning 6. Evaluate effectiveness 7. Revise the plan as indicated by data 8. Document
<p>Environment - The environments in which the person is (or can be) expected to live, learn and grow.</p>	<p>What are the conditions and barriers within various environments that need to be supported?</p>	
<p>Task - The specific things that the person needs or wants to be able to do to reach expectations.</p>	<p>What specific things does the student need to do to reach expectations and make progress? What functional skills are needed?</p>	
<p>Tools - Everything that is needed by the person and others for the person to accomplish the tasks in the places where they need to be done so that progress is achieved.</p>	<p>What is needed by the student and others for the student to do the tasks in the environments to meet expectations? What is needed to enable the student to do (or learn to do) the tasks that lead to high levels of participation and achievement?</p>	

Assistive technology services have traditionally been an expert model, whereby AT devices and implementation strategies were demonstrated to educators by an AT expert with an expectation to follow through with fidelity. Educators are more likely to implement AT if they are actively involved in a capacity building model where the IEP team, with coaching from an AT specialist, comes up with ideas, researches and trials options, takes data and makes AT decisions. Building capacity for implementation of AT and AAC as an inclusionary practice depends on shifting from an expert model to an "ongoing collaborative capacity building" model at each step of the process and engaging in the SETT. A capacity building model for AT/AAC services provides coaching expertise, ongoing support, and collaboration to educators, staff, and families. As a coach, the AT/AAC specialist can ensure consistent implementation of services across environments by sharing knowledge on devices, training on the use with specific students, guide decision making and AT/AAC data collection, and encourage shared ownership of student success.



Activity: Technology Exploration and Reflection

To witness the power of AT and AAC in the lives of people with disabilities for communicating, and participating in learning and life, visit the following websites:

- [SETC Free Recorded Webinars](#)
- [SBSK: Meet Somebody who Communicates with Technology](#)

After exploring these websites, identify two practices or strategies you would like to incorporate into your classroom and/or lessons.

Summary

This chapter on inclusive learning environments highlights the general education setting as the primary setting for all students, including students with disabilities, to receive general education curriculum and instruction. Additional considerations are discussed for ensuring meaningful participation and a sense of belonging for students with disabilities in the general education setting. Universal Design for Learning, culturally responsive practices, equity, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support are foundational in an inclusive learning environment for all students. Inclusive practices that build upon this foundation for the meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities are characterized as: community centered; learner centered; supportive in social and emotional learning and behavior; aligned in curriculum and assessment; effective with adaptations; technology enhanced; and integrated assistive technology. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate for all educators how inclusive learning environments can create conditions for students with various disabilities across grade levels to participate in general education and be part of the community alongside students without disabilities.

Activity: Inclusive Learning Environment Application

Consider the categories reviewed in this chapter and how the content and suggestions might apply to your setting, at any grade prek-12, and beyond.

Elements	Reflections across Different Grades and Learning Environments:
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Do all students have equal opportunities to access the general education setting and curriculum and assessments?</i>• <i>What considerations have been made to ensure those opportunities are equitable?</i>
UDL prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Can all students move about the settings and access tables, sinks, and materials independently?</i>• <i>Did an inventory of the tools and materials in the learning environment help identify what you might need for implementing UDL?</i>
Community Centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What evidence do you see that all students experience a sense of belonging at school, and in your setting?</i>• <i>Has any student been withdrawn or selectively isolated?</i>• <i>Do all students have a positive relationship with teachers and peers?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students with disabilities experience full membership and participation in the general education community? • Are all students engaged in meaningful learning? • Are special educators comfortable and welcomed to observe and collaborate?
Learner Centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do learners have choice and flexibility built into the environment? • Are students involved in the development and evaluation of classroom rules and procedures? • Is there evidence that all students are known and valued? • Are there plans for transitioning students with disabilities in and out comfortably?
Social and Emotional Learning and Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What elements of SEL are part of the curriculum in your setting? • To what extent is a tiered system of intervention support SEL and behavior support in your setting? • Do all students demonstrate enthusiasm and positive emotions toward learning and social engagement?
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are standards and assessment related to general education as well as IEP goals aligned for students receiving special education services? • To what extent are learning goals clear and aligned with formative assessments? • To what extent are foundational skills related to learning goals and considerations for adaptations, increasing access to curriculum and assessment goals?
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are adaptations (accommodations and modifications) designed and monitored in the general education setting? • To what extent is the participation of students who receive special education services observed in the general education setting?
Technology Enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does technology improve access to curriculum, assessment, and peer groups for students with disabilities? • To what degree do students use multiple media (written, spoken, visual) to demonstrate lesson objectives? • To what degree do students engage with multiple types of media to provide information to illustrate a topic or concept?
Assistive Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there processes in place to identify barriers and match student needs with AT supports and strategies? • Are all educators working with a student who uses assistive technology coached and supported to implement AT plans as written?

APPENDIX 2-A: INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT EDUCATOR SELF-REFLECTION

This self-reflection¹⁰¹ is based on the InTASC Model Core Teaching standards designed to guide the teaching preparation and practices of *all* educators in performance, essential knowledge, and critical dispositions. Learning environments is number three of the ten standards considered critical for improving student achievement for *all* students.

This self-reflection is for educators to recognize their own strengths in relation to the standards on learning environments, and integrate in the progression of continuum of growth from preservice to novice, and master teacher, and considering the following points:



- Learning and teaching are complex.
- Teaching expertise can be learned, develops over time, and is not linear.
- Growth can occur through reflection upon experience, feedback, or individual or group professional learning experiences.
- Development depends on context, particularly levels of support.
- It's about the teaching practice and not about the individual teacher.

Performance

I, The Educator...

- collaborate with learners, families, and colleagues to build a safe, positive learning climate of openness, mutual respect, support, and inquiry.
- develop learning experiences that engage learners in collaborative and self-directed learning and that extend learner interaction with ideas and people locally and globally.
- collaborate with learners and colleagues to develop shared values and expectations for respectful interactions, rigorous academic discussions, and individual and group responsibility for quality work.
- manage the learning environment to actively and equitably engage learners by organizing, allocating, and coordinating the resources of time, space, and learners' attention.
- use a variety of methods to engage learners in evaluating the learning environment and collaborate with learners to make appropriate adjustments.
- communicate verbally and nonverbally in ways that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives learners bring to the

¹⁰¹ [InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progression for Teachers](#)

learning environment.

- promote responsible learner use of interactive technologies to extend the possibilities for learning locally and globally.
- intentionally build learner capacity to collaborate in face-to-face and virtual environments

Essential Knowledge

I, the Educator...

- understand the relationship between motivation and engagement and understand how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning.
- knows how to help learners work productively and cooperatively with each other to achieve learning goals.
- knows how to collaborate with learners to establish and monitor elements of a safe and productive learning environment including norms, expectations, routines, and organizational structures.
- understand how learner diversity can affect communication and understands how to communicate effectively in differing environments.
- know how to use technologies and how to guide learners to apply them in appropriate, safe, and effective ways.

Critical Dispositions

I, the Educator...

- am committed to working with learners, colleagues, families, and communities to establish positive and supportive learning environments.
- values the role of learners in promoting each other's learning and recognize the importance of peer relationships in establishing a climate of learning.
- am committed to supporting learners as they participate in decision-making, engage in exploration and invention, work collaboratively and independently, and engage in purposeful learning.
- seeks to foster respectful communication among all members of the learning community.
- am a thoughtful and responsive listener and observer.

APPENDIX 2-B: DISABILITY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY HIGHLIGHTS RELATED TO ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Federal Policies	Policy Highlights Related to Access, Equity, and Inclusion
Section 504 (1974) (34 CFR §104.33)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil right that prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities. • Ensures equal access to education and a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) regardless of the nature of the disability. • Guarantee of accommodations and modifications in public schools and classrooms. • Disability defined as any person who: (i) has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (ii) has a record of such an impairment; or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment.
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and classrooms must be physically accessible to all students. • Makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in schools and public spaces. • Organizations, activities, clubs outside of school must provide reasonable accommodations.
No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of students with disability in state and district accountability systems with cap of two percent taking modified assessment, and one percent taking alternative assessment. • Students with disabilities are expected to have goals based on the same state academic standards as students without disabilities. • General education teachers are required to participate in IEP meetings to develop goals and implement accommodations as needed.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cap of one percent of students with disabilities included in alternative assessments. • Students must have access to appropriate accommodations, such as the ability to use assistive technology, for assessments. • Disaggregate data about student progress so students can receive the support they need. • Professional development and added school support through Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)
Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) (2004) (20 U.S.C. § 1412[a][5][A])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) guarantees the right to access public education. • The LRE principle states to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

APPENDIX 2-C: IEP AND LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

General education is the standards-based curriculum and instruction for the general population of students. **All students are first and foremost general education students, and the general education classroom is the primary learning environment from which all other school learning environments connect.** Students with disabilities are first and foremost general education students, with the added rights and protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). One of the provisions of IDEA is the right to learn in the least restrictive environment, alongside students without disabilities. Another provision is the right to have access to other, alternative settings as needed to make progress on IEP goals.

The least restrictive environment (LRE) is the extent that a student with disabilities will have opportunities to interact and learn with their typically developing peers. Special education is *a service to students* with disabilities provided along a continuum of placement, from least to most restrictive in relation to the general education curriculum and student population.¹⁰² Students can learn in a combination of settings along the continuum, and special education services meet them where they are. Table x shows percentage categories of the continuum of placement options from least to most restrictive in relation to the general education setting.

Setting/Location	Setting/Location Criteria
General Education setting / location	If 50 percent or more of students in a setting <i>are not</i> on an IEP, then the setting is general education, which is designed for diverse students with and without disabilities.
Special Education setting / location	If over 50 percent of students in a setting have an IEP, then the setting is considered special education because the curriculum and environment are designed for students with disabilities.
Special Education Placement	Placement is the percentage of time that students spend in general and special education settings. IDEA requires that schools and districts have a continuum of placement options, from least to most restrictive in relation to the general education settings.
Special Education Services	Special education is not a place, but <i>a service to students</i> with disabilities provided along a continuum of placement options, from least to most restrictive in relation to the general education curriculum and student population.

The placement decision related to setting is not based on how a student with disabilities can make progress in the general education curriculum and grade level standards. Rather, it is based on what the team believes is the best environment for the student to make progress on IEP goals. The IEP team should consider whether the provision of supplementary aids and services can support placement in the general education environment before a more restrictive placement is chosen,

¹⁰² [WAC 392-172A-02055](#) Continuum of alternative placements

such as special classes, separate schooling or other removal from the regular education environment. The IEP ensures students with disabilities can access the general education curriculum. The type of support needed by a student with disabilities does not make a setting more restrictive.¹⁰³

The U.S. Department of Education notes that placement in regular classes may not be the least restrictive placement for every child with a disability. An example is students who experience deafness who need communication systems and a community of peers and educators in a regional program or school for the deaf.¹⁰⁴ When students with disabilities require more restrictive placements to receive an appropriate education, the IEP teams must find opportunities for participation with peers without disabilities in alternate general education settings, including nonacademic extracurricular activities, such as recess periods, physical education classes, or student mealtimes. Students age 18–21 in a transition program would have community setting as the LRE.

IDEA requires that the IEP team consider possible harmful effects of more restrictive settings, and an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the general education class, and in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, including a description of any adaptations needed for the participation in physical education. IDEA also states that significant disruption to teaching and student learning in general education should be considered when determining the appropriateness of a placement.

The term "supplementary aids and services" means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in general education classes or other education-related settings to enable students eligible for special education to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with the least restrictive environment requirements.¹⁰⁵

Supplementary aids and services are important for the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education or other education-related settings for supporting participation in academic and nonacademic settings and activities as deemed appropriate by the student's IEP team. Supplementary aids and services can be provided for transitions, recess, lunch, the bus, and other school settings or activities where support is needed. Services can include the use of assistive technology, adapted seating, adapted materials, visual aids, an instructional assistant, etc.

¹⁰³ [TIES Brief #3 January, 2020](#)

¹⁰⁴ [US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. Deaf Students Education Services](#)

¹⁰⁵ [WAC 392-172A-02065 Nonacademic Setting](#)

APPENDIX 2-D: STUDENT LEARNING PROFILE

The student learning profile is adapted from the template by Snell and Janney, with features added that align with planning for differentiation and universal design for learning in relation to general education. Page one of the profile can be completed by educators, families, or students themselves to identify strengths, preferences, interests and needs for differentiation, and UDL. Page two is to identify IEP or 504 goals to be considered for embedded strategies.¹⁰⁶

Student:	Age: Grade:	Family:
School: Teachers:	Education Setting:	
Social - working with others, following directions, respectful. Communication - understanding others, and expressing needs, ideas, preferences, experiences. Cognitive - problem solving, processing information. conceptual and procedural learning. Adaptive - self-managing work, organization, independence, self-care, regulating behavior. Motor - uses and manages tools for writing/typing, reading, communicating, and self-care.	Strengths:	Preferences:
	Interests:	Needs:
Strengths in relation to standards:	Math:	English Language Arts:
UDL – student preferences for enhanced environment, curriculum, and instruction:	Recognition: Engagement: Expression:	

¹⁰⁶ (Adapted from Janney & Snell (2013) p. 53

Technology integration preferences:	
Special Education or 504 goals	
Goals:	
Supplementary Aids and Services, accommodations, and modifications:	
Additional supports (behavior, social, physical, communication, etc.)	
Collaborative plan for provision of special education services in least restrictive environment:	

APPENDIX 2-E: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING STUDENT FOCUS

An educator planning tool based on the CASEL¹⁰⁷ framework for embedding SEL curriculum and instruction using developmentally appropriate methods across grades levels

SELF-AWARENESS: The ability to understand how one’s personal emotions, thoughts, and values influence their behaviors, and are aware of their own strengths and limitations.	
Focus for students:	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify personal and cultural assets.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Explore the link between feelings, values, thoughts, and actions.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Examine personal biases.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a growth mindset and cultivate strengths.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice positive visualizations, affirmations, relaxation / meditation.
SELF-MANAGEMENT: The ability to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors; plan and execute goals; organize time and tasks; use stress-management strategies; and demonstrate self-determination.	
Focus for students:	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice stress management strategies.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use tools for planning and organization.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Set goals and steps toward achieving goals.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate small and big successes.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and regulating emotions.
SOCIAL AWARENESS: The ability to recognize social and cultural norms, listen to and consider different perspectives, and have an awareness of how diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts influence perspectives, thoughts, and feelings. Also, the ability to recognize and appropriately respond to the emotions of others, and show empathy and compassion toward adversity.	
Focus for students:	<input type="checkbox"/> Practices skills for community building: talk about the feelings and perspectives of others, demonstrate acts of compassion, express gratitude.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster awareness of norms of society and different cultures.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide time and opportunities for students to get to know each other, reduce stereotypes, and improve attitudes toward diversity.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Co-create classroom rules of conduct and identify positive / appreciated behaviors.

¹⁰⁷ [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships and effectively communicate and collaborate with diverse individuals and groups.

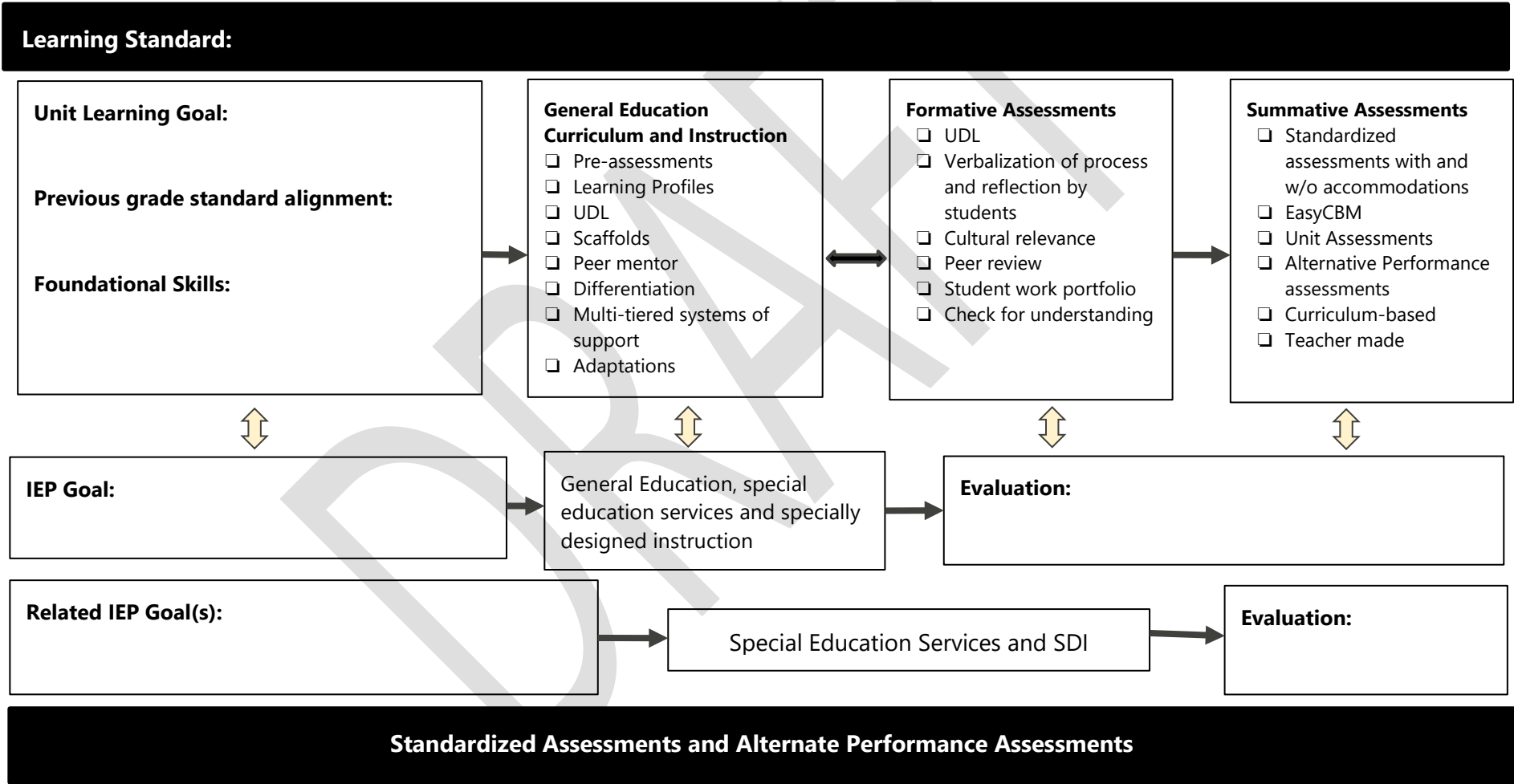
Focus for students:	<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge the strengths and positive qualities in others
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice the art of listening, dialogue, and negotiation.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in respectful problem solving and conflict resolution.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice collaborative decision-making and teamwork.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Take different roles in cooperative and project-based learning.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Show appreciation for different ways of being and doing things.

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: The ability to make thoughtful, caring, and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Focus for students:	<input type="checkbox"/> Explore the value of ethics and safety for the benefit of others and the community.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the benefits and consequences of actions on others.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice open-mindedness to possible solutions for personal and social problems.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use logic, critical thinking, and reasoning to analyze and interpret events, facts, and interactions with others.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on the impact of self on the well-being of others and the community.

APPENDIX 2-F: STANDARDS ALIGNMENT MAP

This map structure shows how general education goals, and IEP goals can be aligned with general education standards, instruction, and assessment in the general education settings. When goals, assessments, and standards are aligned, the student with disabilities benefits from both general education instruction and special education services in the general education context.



APPENDIX 2-G: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

The purpose of this form is to describe the fit between what is expected of all students during an activity or a lesson, and how those expectations match the strengths and needs of an individual student who may need environmental, curriculum or instructional adaptations. The information is gathered during a 30–60 minute observation and can be used by the collaborative team to develop accommodations or modifications for the learning context.

Date: _____ Name of observer: _____ Student initials: _____ Grade: _____

Lesson or activity objective: (this can be communicated by the lead teacher or interpreted based on observation. The objective should include a verb that describes the behaviors and level of complexity that is measured in a formative assessment)

Observation

Write observed expectations of whole class in each domain ↓	Student's Strengths in relation to expectations	Student's challenges/ needs in relation to expectations	Suggested Adaptation: Accommodation or Modification	Team follow-up / review of impact
Social:				
Self-regulation:				
Cognitive:				
Physical:				

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