



Inclusive Leadership Guide

+ TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
• Purpose	
• Guidebook for Change	
WHAT IS INCLUSION?	4
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ACTION	5
• Inclusion: All Feel Welcomed and Valued	
• Diversity: All the Ways We Differ	
• Effective Alignment: All Have the Opportunity to Participate Fully	
• Access: Any and All Abilities	
• Benefits of Inclusion	
• Establishing Common Mindsets	
INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS.....	7
• Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	
• Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	
• Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	
• Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT)	
ALIGNMENT WITH VISION/MISSION	9
• Building a Schoolwide Commitment to Inclusive Schools	
• Impact on Students with Disabilities	
SYSTEMS CHANGE OVERVIEW	10
• Systems Change Data	
ALIGNMENT OF SUPPORTS AND SERVICES	12
• Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	
• Comparison of MTSS and SDI	
• Data-Based Decision-Making (DBDM)	
• Inclusive Scheduling	
• Understanding Roles and Responsibilities	
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY	15
SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS	16
• Expectations for Students with Disabilities	
• Accelerated Learning	
• Personalized Learning	
• Intervention/Remediation	
• High-Dosage Tutoring	
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND ASSESSMENTS.....	19
• Instructional Coach	
• Lesson and Intervention Design and Plans	
• Collaborative problem-solving is a process that should be modeled to solve problems.	
• Effective Assessments for All Grade Levels and All Content	
• Assessments for Planning and Evaluating Educational Services	
DATA-BASED INDIVIDUALIZATION (DBI) TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES	26
EFFECTIVE ROUTINES	26
• Sample Procedure 1	
• Sample Procedure 2	
• Sample Procedure 3	
BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES.....	28
• Behavior Interventions Using ABC Strategies	
• Behavior Interventions Strategies:	
• De-escalation	
ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS	30
• Characteristics of an Engaging Learning Environment	
TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS.....	30
• Development of Social Management Skills	
• Components of Building Teacher-Student Relationships	
PEER TUTORING AND FLEXIBLE GROUPING.....	33
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	34
• Common Questions Regarding Inclusive Professional Development	
UNDERSTANDING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICIES/MANDATES REGARDING IDENTIFYING AND EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	35
• Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	
• Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	
• Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROFESSIONALS AND FAMILIES.....	38
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	39
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	40

+ INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Mississippi leaders are committed to ensuring that each student has an equitable opportunity to be successful in college, career, and community. In Mississippi, the academic performance of students with disabilities lags behind their general education peers. Due to a lack of equitable access and opportunity, students with disabilities tend to experience lower standardized test scores, graduation rates, and postsecondary participation. A noted increase in suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities typically leads to less access to effective teachers and rigorous coursework in alternate settings. Mississippi is currently facing a teacher shortage in special education, which can result in placing unprepared teachers in classrooms serving our most vulnerable students. General education teachers frequently lack the knowledge, skill, and support to work effectively with students with disabilities, who spend most of their days in general education classes. Students with disabilities, students of color, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have been disproportionately represented in special education. Historical practices for these students have resulted in lowered educator expectations. Administrators are the catalyst for shifting toward inclusive schools that support the growth and development of all students.

Guidebook for Change

This guidebook is developed to support inclusive principal leadership resulting in stronger school cultures and distributive leadership across staff to serve all learners well and ensure all students feel safe, supported, and valued in school (Officers, 2020). Equitable practices across all learning environments require principals to respond effectively to the potential and needs of each student. This guidebook focuses on the alignment of systems and increasing support for leaders. Leaders then have the resources to assist educators with universal Tier I instruction for all learners, cultivating school environments where all students and staffs feel safe, supported, and valued. This guide will provide leaders with high-impact strategies and resources to advance positive outcomes for all students, especially those with disabilities.

What the school leader's guide is:

- A definition of inclusion with practices and examples of how it looks in action
- An explanation, rooted in research, for why inclusion works with all students
- Self-assessment tools to help you reflect on how closely your school's current instruction aligns with practice
- A set of potential next steps and resources for strengthening practice across your school

[PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities](#) (Council of Chief State School Officers)



+ WHAT IS INCLUSION?

Through advancing inclusive principal leadership practices in Mississippi, the state is making a commitment to ensure principals are well prepared to support teachers in improving learning outcomes for ALL students, including those with disabilities and other learning differences. Inclusive principals ensure high expectations and appropriate support so every student—across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, background, and income—excels in school.

Inclusive practices build a principal's capacity to distribute leadership and provide the resources necessary to support and retain effective teachers. Principals who effectively implement inclusive practices create equitable learning environments where each student feels a sense of belonging and success.

Inclusion IS...

- Shared vision and practice that everyone belongs, regardless of perceived ability or disability
- Growth mindset believing everyone can learn and benefit from increased expectations of general education standards
- Supported by research showing that students with disabilities included in general education develop self-determination and acquire greater social and academic gains
- Presumed competence in understanding that students learn best when they feel valued and are held to high expectations
- Practice of Inclusive Frameworks, high-leverage practices, evidence-based practices, and differentiation

Inclusion IS NOT...

- Traditional school practices with a shared belief and expectation that students outside of the norm be “ready to learn” and able to do the same work as students without disabilities
- Fixed mindset that student behaviors and the capacity to learn are limited and cannot be changed
- Integration of arranged time with peers without disabilities and should include low expectations of students with disabilities
- Mainstreaming of placement in general education settings, including minimal goals, planning, and supports
- Unidimensional instructional strategies, including narrow learning objectives, standardized expectations, and little flexibility

Adapted from Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

To promote inclusive school cultures, everyone must be aware of the terminology supporting individuals with disabilities. People First Language (PFL) puts the person before the disability and describes what a person has, not who a person is. PFL uses phrases such as “children with disabilities” instead of phrases that identify people based solely on their disability, such as “cognitive disability.”



+ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ACTION

Understanding the connections to diversity, equity, and inclusion is important. Biases associated with students with disabilities shape and influence the process by which students are identified as having a disability and can lead to the overrepresentation of students of color in special education. Facing these biases allows leaders to make shifts that support all learners. Shifts in the system to eliminate bias are essential to student outcomes.

Inclusion: All Feel Welcomed and Valued

Inclusion: Each student has a sense of belonging to school environments where they feel welcomed, respected, represented, supported, and valued to participate fully.

- All school leaders ensure accessibility, encourage high-leverage practices in all classrooms, and promote cohesiveness and shared responsibility.
- All teachers are given supports and resources to work collaboratively in all environments with a common goal of supporting all learners.
- All students are part of a community, with various support services provided to them as needed.
- Every school culture sets the expectation that all students can be successful and are free of judgment.

Diversity: All the Ways We Differ

Diversity: Everyone feels valued based on how students differ, encompassing the distinctive characteristics that make each individual or group different.

- All schools value differences and provide opportunities for each student's experiences and contributions to be valued.
- All schools promote family and community engagement through a holistic, student-centered culture to meet the diverse needs of student populations.
- Each student can learn in the school, program, and classroom in the most appropriate way to meet their needs and interests (Student-centered learning to meaningfully engage with grade-level instructional content adapted to meet their unique needs and learning styles).
- Every student has opportunities to participate in programs and services with culturally relevant standards, curricula, instruction, assessments, as well as the right to read text that mirrors their experiences and languages, providing windows into the lives of others and opening doors into a diverse world (Educational Equity).

Effective Alignment: All Have the Opportunity to Participate Fully

Effective alignment of policies and practices to ensure fairness, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students to eliminate barriers preventing full participation in educational opportunities.

- All communication and procedures will support unified verbiage, practices, and policies to promote one school system.
- Every department will align efforts to allocate resources to achieve fiscal equity and monitor equitable implementation of standards and assessments.
- Each student will be empowered with options to ensure families have access to high-quality educational opportunities that align with community needs.
- Every school has trained inclusive leaders and teachers to work cohesively through grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to provide high-leverage instructional practices, universal Tier I instruction (Universal Design for Learning [UDL], Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching [CLRP], Social Emotional Learning [SEL], and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports [PBIS]), interventions for skills deficits through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, and appropriate supports to make learning accessible for all.

Access: Any and All Abilities

Access: The commitment for everyone to be included in all activities and programs

- All students will have appropriate accommodations to secure access to pre-k classes, courses, programs, resources, grade-level content, and curricula, enabling student access to proficiency and growth in all assessed areas in order to graduate from high school college and career ready.

- All educators commit to providing access that requires a student, once they have “entered” into the learning process, to have the support needed to “move out” of the learning process and move into another area.
- All students will receive literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading and evidence-based instructional practices, and every teacher will advocate for their students’ right to read on grade level.
- All postsecondary success is attainable for all students if provided equitable access and the appropriate supports needed to be successful.

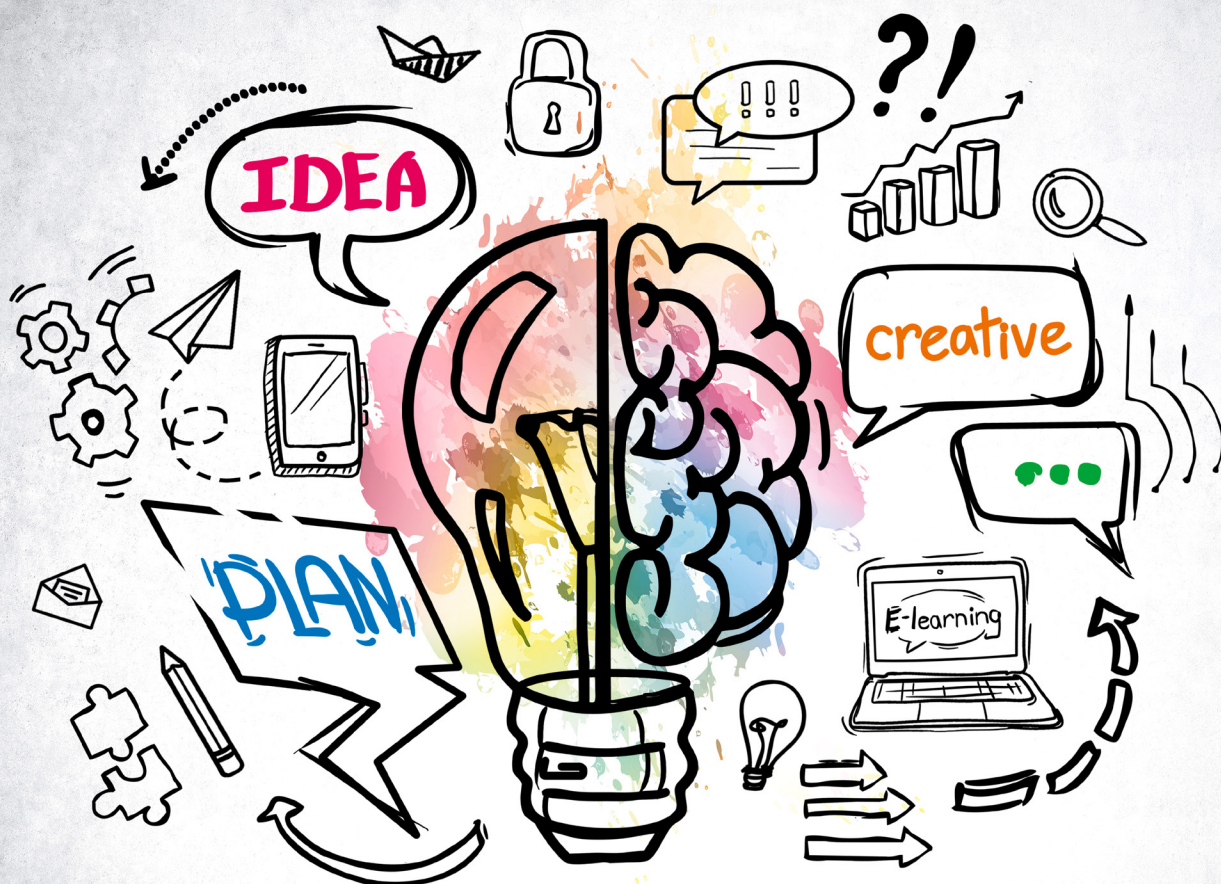
Benefits of Inclusion

- Improved communication and social skills
- Higher expectations for student learning
- Higher attendance rates
- Functioning at a higher level than in segregated classrooms
- Increased engagement in school
- Improved performance on state tests
- Increased academic productivity and initiation with peers
- Improved adult outcomes for postsecondary education, employment, and independence

Establishing Common Mindsets

Developing common mindsets in schools is beneficial because it reduces the stigma associated with learning and attention issues. Research has shown the presence of stigma is likely to adversely affect educational expectations and student academic outcomes, over and above the influence of specific academic deficits. In many schools, students with disabilities can be subject to all five elements of stigma influenced by other students and educators: labeling, stereotyping, separation, loss of status, and discrimination. Critical mindsets include educators’ sense of self-efficacy, positive orientation toward inclusion and personal responsibility for all students, and confidence that they can improve as professionals and that all students can learn through practice and hard work.

Through mindful systemic practices, establishing a positive climate and culture and effective instructional practices, educators can establish a common mindset that promotes the success of all students.



Instructional Practices

- Differentiate instruction, leverage UDL planning, and adapt instructional delivery practices that provide access to the curriculum for all students.
- Understand learning and attention issues are brain-based conditions requiring supports and strategies to be successful.
- Explicitly teach students how to become strategic learners.
- Provide supports to students, helping them develop socially, cognitively, and emotionally.
- Leverage the knowledge and skills of all disciplines to support individual student needs and strengths.
- Provide the differentiation students may need while holding them to grade-level standards.
- Ensure accommodations and modifications are provided with fidelity.

Systemic Practices

- Promote shared responsibility.
- Prepare all teachers to work with students with disabilities and those from diverse disabilities.
- Evaluate based on students' rate of growth, not the discrepancy between their performance and grade level.
- Provide ways to review student data and facilitate integrated lesson planning.
- Coordinate learning between home and school.
- Create structures and routines that integrate collaboration opportunities throughout the school community.
- Ensure teachers set high expectations for all students.
- Align approaches to provide consistent learning methods across classrooms.

Cultures

- Build a sense of belonging through classroom norms and practices.
- Create opportunities for student success, which increases student motivation.
- Balance high expectations with demonstrating an understanding of the challenges and circumstances students face.
- Share ideas.
- Enable meaningful connections between content and students' background knowledge, interests, and cultures.

For more specific information on this topic, visit

[Celebrating 50 Years of the Rehabilitation Act: A Path to Inclusive Education.](#)

+ INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. UDL is found in many U.S. [public policies](#) around K-12 education, higher education, educational technology, and workforce development. The [UDL Guidelines](#) are used in the implementation of UDL.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

[Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#) is an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. It is a way to create positive, predictable, equitable, and safe learning environments where everyone thrives. When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves social emotional competence, academic success, school climate, and teacher health and well-being. When schools implement PBIS, they start by implementing it [schoolwide](#). Three critical features – systems, practices, and data – work together to promote positive, predictable, safe environments for everyone in all school settings.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

[Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities; manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain supportive relationships; and make responsible and caring decisions. There are several evidence-based curricula for SEL to help schools implement Mississippi's SEL Standards. These can be found at What Works Clearinghouse, [CASEL](#), and other sites.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT)

[Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching \(CLRT\)](#) is a willingness to use students' customs, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) further states four conditions necessary for culturally responsive teaching:

- Emphasizing the human purpose of what is being learned and its relationship to the student's experience
- Sharing the ownership of knowing with all students
- Collaboration and cooperation. The class assumes a hopeful view of people and their capacity to change.
- Treating all students equitably, inviting them to point out behaviors or practices that discriminate.

Additionally, incorporating teaching practices that support the learning, development, and engagement of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds is essential.

[Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) identifies three steps to becoming a linguistically responsive teacher:

1. Become familiar with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds.
2. Understand the language demands involved in given learning tasks.
3. Develop skills to apply appropriate scaffolds for student support.

According to the [ASCD](#), there are four conditions necessary for culturally responsive teaching:

1. Establish inclusion
2. Develop a positive attitude
3. Enhance meaning
4. Engender competence



+ ALIGNMENT WITH VISION/MISSION

Building a Schoolwide Commitment to Inclusive Schools

Schools need a common vision incorporating the idea students should be educated in an inclusive setting that encourages tolerance, honesty, and diverse beliefs. To create a culture of team spirit, all members must acknowledge and respect others and may communicate and behave differently in certain situations. All team members must be allowed to voice their ideas, feel included, and create change. How the adults are organized in a school building is a foundational driver of school outcomes. If the daily interactions of teachers, administrators, partners, parents, and students leave them more satisfied, productive, supported, connected, and engaged, evidence shows the school will achieve greater success.

Action	Implementation
Build principal relationships with teachers and parents that are based on open communication and mutual trust.	• Display trust in teachers. • Listen to teachers' and parents' ideas, concerns, and problems. • Treat staff fairly. • Allow for rich dialogue. • Create time to listen to concerns and ideas. • Support inclusive practices through active involvement (e.g., involvement in professional development [PD] activities, individualized education program [IEP] meetings, etc.). • Treat teachers and staff fairly.
Build a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students.	• Prepare general and special education teachers to feel adequately equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities. • Understand the nature and severity of students' disabilities. • Ensure the availability of supports in the classroom (e.g., personnel such as paraeducators and consultants, curriculum materials, etc.). • Provide professional development to ensure the building of skills to support student needs. • Ensure supports (e.g., planning time).
Ensure all educators are well prepared to address the needs of students in their classroom.	• Develop collaborative planning processes. • Provide targeted professional development before starting an inclusive program. • Offer continuous PD to discuss the inclusive program and solve problems. • Embed learning opportunities within the teachers' daily work. • Participate in content-area and grade-level teams. • Develop PLCs to generate multiple solutions to complex problems and provide opportunities to learn from others as they express and share expertise.

Adapted from Principal Leadership: Moving Toward Inclusive and High-Achieving Schools for Students with Disabilities

Impact on Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to identify trends in areas of significant disproportionality annually. Significant disproportionality refers to three separate but related areas impacting a student's educational experience:

- Identification for special education (i.e., eligibility)
- Educational placement (once identified as eligible for special education)
- Discipline

Some simple questions to ask as the leader of your school may be:

“Are students of color identified as needing special education services more often than their white peers?”

“Are Black or African American students in more restrictive settings than their peers?”

“Are all students receiving the same disciplinary consequences?”

For more information on your school district's disproportionality determinations, check with your local special education director or contact the Mississippi Department of Education.

Professional Growth System

The Mississippi Professional Growth System (PGS) is designed to improve student achievement by providing teachers and administrators with feedback to inform continuous improvement. The PGS is established in state law and the state agency's Accreditation Standards.

+ SYSTEMS CHANGE OVERVIEW

Schools, districts, and classrooms are dynamic environments, full of energy and talent. Managing them calls for creative leadership and teaching approaches. Leaders in education need to anticipate how interconnected aspects of schools interact and affect each other. Systems help leaders organize schools by harnessing their assets, especially when there are big changes that need to be made to schoolwide systems. As educational leaders work to harness the energy of the school for a positive change, they have to get everyone on the page and push in the same direction: leaders, families, teachers, and instructional practices.

School Structures and Administrative Support

- Data-based decision-making
- Alignment of MTSS and specially designed instruction (SDI)
- Scheduling changes for staff and students, MTSS, collaboration, and collaborative teaching
- Administrative support
- High-quality instructional materials
- School leadership committee for inclusion
- Monitoring of schoolwide systems of collaboration
- Job-embedded, cross-disciplinary professional development connected to student outcomes

Family/Family Partnerships

- Communication
- Homeschool continuity
- Partnerships
- Meaningful activities to engage in planning and designing instruction

School Community

- Growth mindset Flexible learning environments
- Peer supports
- Mentoring
- Collaborative planning and teaching
- Collective IEP team decision-making

Instructional Strategies

- Universal Design for Learning
- High Leverage Practices
- Social Emotional Learning
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive

Teaching

- Evidence-based practices

Systems Change Data

Data is the driver behind all district and school policies. District and building leaders consistently analyze data for trends and patterns to guide instructional decisions. At times we can find discrepancies in the data being evaluated by district leadership over specific departments and building-level administrators. When looking at different data components from singular lenses, we can misinterpret the patterns and trends. Below are some examples of data that leaders should evaluate to establish patterns and trends of the performance and needs of all subgroups.

Attendance Data

Students with poor attendance need an intervention. Parent meetings must be set up and attendance plans created. Schools may develop alternate ways to reach and teach those students.

Discipline Data

Discipline records allow teams to develop behavioral interventions. By analyzing this data by teacher or grade level, you may see patterns or trends that can be addressed with classroom management. It is great to have district and schoolwide policies regarding discipline, but based on the needs of specific groups of students, the system may need to make adaptations.

Instructional Minutes

Tracking how many minutes students are actively engaged in learning (e.g., active learning-speaking with each other, hands-on projects, discussions or group work, etc.) can lead the charge to change or adapt instruction. Students passively listening, reading silently, or completing independent work are not engaged in learning. Principals should set the expectation for instructional time and activities and monitor them consistently to shift the school's culture.

Special Education

First, special education should be viewed as an intervention to teach students strategies to overcome barriers based on their disability, not a forever program. Some students may need special education services the entire time they are in school. However, the majority of students with disabilities do not have cognitive disabilities, which means they have the ability to learn. These students should be able to move in-between programs and eventually be exited. Principals should keep track of the number of students entering (this number reflects the effectiveness of universal Tier 1 instruction) and exiting the program (an indicator of the effectiveness of the existing plans). For those who remain in the program, you should evaluate the amount of time those students spend with their nondisabled peers. Any time away from those peers tends to widen academic and social gaps. The goal should be to keep all students together to the maximum extent possible with appropriate support provided to them in the educational setting.

English Language Learner Reclassification

The goal of the program is to ensure students are proficient in English. This data point will enable a leadership team to gauge the impact of EL programs. You should not deem your school successful at a school site if students are not being reclassified. Long-term EL students should also be a data point to consider.

Data Team Tools:

- [Intervention Plan](#)
- [Intensification Strategy Checklist](#)
- [Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis](#)

+ ALIGNMENT OF SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

MTSS is a framework designed to meet the needs of all students, and it is considered the best practice for teaching and learning. Occasionally, practices and/or requirements can drift from the intent of the original purpose. When this happens, there can be some confusion. When implemented with fidelity, a tiered support system can reduce the number of inappropriate special education referrals and placements. It is not a “wait to fail” model; instead, it is considered a “prevention” model designed to provide support for students in areas of specific need. Understand that not all students will require support. With robust Tier I instruction, consisting of evidence-based practices (EBPs) and high-leverage practices (HLPs), the number of students needing support will be reduced, which is far more manageable for educators and effective for students. Educators must determine if the data suggests more individualized instruction is needed. However, an educator or parent may request the special education eligibility process be initiated at any time.

Additionally, if a student is suspected of having some type of disability, an evaluation for eligibility cannot be denied or delayed for any reason. There is no standard practice for “tiering students” because interventions are tiered, not students. Students will continue to move within the tiers even if they are eligible for special education.

Other elements of the MTSS framework that provide power to learning and achieving improved outcomes are that it is flexible, collaborative, and, most importantly, allows educators to facilitate learning for students thoughtfully, intentionally, and supportively. The foundation of effective MTSS is ensuring that an effective Tier I program meets the needs of approximately 80% of students. The framework’s foundation is Tier I, where all students in Mississippi should receive their daily core instruction. Tier I is considered the most important level of support because it provides the foundation for successful teaching and learning in school. There must be an intentional focus on providing effective Tier I instruction since interventions alone are not the solution. It is important that all learners, including students with disabilities, English Learners (ELs), and gifted students, receive the appropriate support and/or accommodations to meet their diverse needs.

Providing effective Tier I instruction is critical for

meeting the needs of all students. It should be designed adequately so all students have the support needed to access the core curriculum. To ensure that students with disabilities have access to effective Tier I instruction, it is critical they have access to SDI that allows them to access the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards and ensures their right to free appropriate public education (FAPE). Collectively building Tier I instruction is the most effective process in shifting to inclusion and improving outcomes for all learners. ELs also should be provided with adequate high-leverage practices that allow them to be able to access effective Tier I instruction ([High-Leverage Practices for Teaching ELs](#)).

When 100% of the students are receiving access to Tier I instruction, and at least 80% are not being successful, there are some actions for intensifying instruction at the Tier I level that should be considered. These actions involve the collective efforts of leaders, teachers, support staff, and parents. If your school has an inverted pyramid, the leadership team should consider the additional questions below to determine possible root causes for this concern.

- Does Tier I instruction include a viable curriculum (i.e., HQIM) and instructional practices that include differentiation, high-leverage practices, and evidence-based practices?
- Are the numbers of students in need of interventions or intensive interventions greater than 20% (include all students in your school population)?
- Is any specific subgroup indicating a strong need for interventions?
- Does professional learning support continuous collective improvement instructional practices?

Incorporating differentiation into instruction provides an opportunity to meet the diverse needs of all students. Research also indicated that evidence-based practices (EBPs), when coupled with high-leverage practices (HLPs), provide a continuum of supports that result in a rapid response to academic and/or behavioral needs. These practices are applicable to all classrooms to help support the implementation of effective Tier I instruction. For additional supporting information, see [What Works Clearinghouse](#), [CEC](#), and [TeachingWorks](#).

Comparison of MTSS and SDI

MTSS (Academic and behavior interventions for all students, including students with disabilities)		SDI (Targeted intervention for eligible students only)
Universal Tier 1 Instruction	Tier II and III Instruction	Intervention Based on Disability-Support Access
Providing effective, accessible instruction for all learners	Providing increasingly intensive levels of intervention for students experiencing an academic, behavioral, or social/emotional gap	Adapting content, methodology, or instruction delivery to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability
UDL Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy (CLRP) SEL PBIS Evidence-based practices High-leverage practices High-quality instructional materials	Proactive and reactive to individual needs based on formative assessments Available to the whole class, including students with IEPs Students receiving SDI may be included in MTSS based on academic, behavioral, or social/emotional gaps but will receive SDI to help make the services accessible based on their individual needs.	Initially reactive to individual formal evaluations and informal assessments to determine eligibility for special education Special educators then become proactive in ongoing instructional planning. Available only to individual students with an IEP

Resources

UDL casel.org pbis.org highleveragepractices.org	National Center on Intensive Intervention Standards-Relevant Instruction and MTSS IC: Assessment Practices Within a MTSS Using Sample Lessons to Support Continuity of Learning Academic Intervention Taxonomy Briefs High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)	Preparing Educators in the Endrew Era How Can We Ensure IEP Teams Provide the Most Intensive Supports? Supporting Students With Disabilities
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Additional supports for this section:

[Specially Designed Instruction Guidance Document](#)

[Access for All 2.0](#)

[Mississippi Department of Education \(MDE\) Intervention Services](#)

Data-Based Decision-Making (DBDM)

Data-based decision-making (DBDM) is an essential component of MTSS. It is a process for making informed decisions about instructional needs, the effectiveness of instruction, and the level of intensity necessary to support students in need of interventions. DBDM should be a part of weekly or bi-weekly grade-level planning times. Effective grade-level planning teams can easily identify the strengths and needs of individual students, which leads to greater gains in a shorter amount of time. Implementing DBDM in grade-level planning teams reduces the number of meetings required of teachers during the school year and increases instructional time.

Inclusive Scheduling

Inclusive scheduling is a team process to develop a schoolwide master schedule that includes support for students in inclusive classrooms and other general education settings. The following components should drive the master schedule:

- Increased time in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities
- Level and intensity of support for students to be successful in the LRE
- Consideration of instructional supports for students without disabilities
- Expectations that all students will make adequate yearly progress based on the general education standards and curriculum
- Ongoing collaborative planning time among education professionals

Administrators must understand LRE to create inclusive mastery schedules. Best practices recommend starting with the schedules of students with disabilities to ensure the services determined by the IEP can be provided. The services are not negotiated by the master schedule. The services (amount of time) should not be designed by class schedule blocks but based on students' individual needs. Failing to comply with the required services is not an option. Therefore, it is preferable that scheduling begins by looking at the service needs of students. Services determined by the IEP team are supported in all classes, not just tested classes. Refusing to provide services in all learning environments, as determined by the IEP team, is not an option. These considerations must be at the forefront of scheduling.

Additional Resources to Support Inclusive Scheduling:

- [Inclusive Scheduling from Florida Inclusive Network](#)
- [Inclusionary Practices and Systems Master Schedules by Haring Center](#)



Understanding Roles and Responsibilities:

Historically, we have viewed all educators as teachers that provide instruction to students. However, to shift to inclusive schools with aligned systems and collective efficacy, the roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined as they work together to change student outcomes. The content teacher is the expert in content instruction and the logical learning sequence for all learners. Interventionists are experts on specific academic and behavioral skills that need targeted instruction. The special education teacher is an access specialist that should be focused on removing barriers to access learning based on the manifestation of the disability. All three educators should work together to support the learning outcomes of all students. Content teachers should have scheduled classrooms, while the schedules of interventionists and special education teachers should reflect the support services provided to the students. The following table lays out those roles and responsibilities.

Content Teacher – Instructional Specialist

- Focuses on content instruction following a logical sequence of learning for all students
- Teaches all students for a set time period each day (Scheduled periods of instruction)

Interventionist – Skills Specialist

- Focuses on academic deficits for all students
- Targets instruction on a specific skill as needed for all students (Scheduled time for skilled intervention)

Special Education Teacher – Access Specialist

- Focuses on adaptations to make learning accessible for students based on impact of disability
- Provides services to students who qualify for special education services (Scheduled time for services)

+ BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY

During collective team planning times, a process must be developed to grow the team that is teacher-driven and directly connected to measurable outcomes. Implementation science is a theory that provides a structure and framework for a problem-solving process that leads to more effective implementation of solutions and improved student outcomes.

If you do not have a collective system in place, consider coaching teams to develop and implement an effective process that will focus on improving teacher practice and outcomes for all learners. For more information, view [Effective Coaching Brief: Improving Teacher Practice and Outcomes](#) by the National Center for Systemic Improvement.

Collaborative Planning Processes and Implementation Science

- [Planning for Instruction Practice Brief: 5 Steps of a Collective Efficacy Cycle](#)
- [Implementation Science and Practice in the Education Sector](#)
- [Quality Improvement Approaches: Implementation Science](#)

Delivering Instruction

- [Delivering Instruction](#)
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)

Intervention

- [MDE Intervention Services](#)
- [Reviewing and Intensifying Instruction \(National Center for Intensive Intervention\)](#)

High-Quality Instructional Materials

- [MDE High-Quality Instructional Materials \(EdUpdate\)](#)

+ SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Disability categories are necessary for receiving special education services, but when it comes to who a student is and what they need to succeed in school, more specific information is needed. We need to be mindful that the use of labels does not 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. [The Family Guides to Special Education Services](#) can further explain the eligibility process and the impact of specific disabilities on accessing the grade-level standards and curriculum.

Collaboration between educators and families is fundamental in providing 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 LRE to the greatest extent possible. Students with disabilities are general education students with access to general education standards and curriculum. These students receive special education services to access learning.

The [Specially Designed Instruction Guidance Document](#) provides specific information for each of the following topics:

High-Quality Instruction and SDI.....Pages 34-42

SDI in Inclusive Frameworks.....Pages 50-55

Accommodations and modifications are not SDI and considered the role of the team to determine needs; all educators provide when teaching that child.Pages 8-9

Expectations for Students with Disabilities

Designing instruction for students with disabilities can be difficult. [The Opportunity Myth](#) is the foundation and research to move into accelerated learning with less focus on remediation. Historically, schools want to remediate student learning gaps and delay access to grade-level work until all the missing learning is remediated. The research shows this approach moves students backward by continuing to widen the academic gap between students who are being remediated and their grade-level peers (Rollins, 2014). According to the Opportunity Myth research, “When students who started the year behind grade level had access to stronger instruction... they closed gaps with their peers by six months; in classrooms with more grade-appropriate assignments, these gaps closed by more than seven months.” Retention and remediation are the go-to models for addressing learning loss, but they are based on the deficit views of students and only serve to delay learning and further decrease student self-confidence and engagement. It is the time for educators to provide students with “the most personalized and engaging instruction possible” by committing to accelerated and personalized learning for students who have fallen behind instead of remediating their learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).



Most students with good Tier I instruction will move through each grade with little or no need for extra support. On the other hand, some students with disabilities and some others may need more time to move through the essential skills and concepts of the grade level in a given discipline or may be working on content more typical for a different grade or age level. Students with more significant disabilities may use the alternate standards. Educators must recognize that some students are on different Tier I learning trajectories and must be prepared to provide the appropriate level of Tier I instruction. The ultimate goal is to ensure every student still has access to grade-level content, even if they need additional support. Below are four specific instructional methods that may be used when designing instruction for students with disabilities.



Accelerated Learning

Effective acceleration programs streamline content, reducing redundancies in curriculum to focus on rigorous, grade-level content while familiarizing all students with prerequisite skills at critical junctures. This careful focus allows students to make up for lost instruction while keeping up with grade-level instruction.

This type of learning challenges traditional academic structures, influencing everything from instructional content and the number of hours spent teaching.

Additional Resources

- [TNTP](#) recommendations for district leaders, policymakers, and curriculum directors
- [Acceleration: Jump-Starting Students Who Are Behind](#) (ASCD.org)
- [Acceleration, Not Remediation: Lessons from the Field](#) ([Learning Acceleration Guide](#))
- [Rethinking Intervention-Instruction Partners](#)
- [Unlocking Acceleration: How Below Grade-Level Work is Holding Students Back in Literacy](#)
- [Accelerating the Academic Achievement of Students Referred to Developmental Education](#) (Community College Research Center, Teacher College, Columbia University)
- [From Remediation to Acceleration: Early Lessons From Two Philadelphia Back on Track Schools](#) (Jobs for the Future)

Personalized Learning

Tailor instruction, expression of learning, and assessment to each student's unique needs and preferences. The what, when, where, and how of learning is tailored to meet each student's strengths, skills, needs, and interests, allowing them to take ownership of their learning. Students also develop deep connections to each other, their teachers, and other adults.

Additional Resources

- [Next Generation Learning: Reimagining Learning for the 21st Century-ExcelinED](#)
- [Personalized Learning-Education Week](#)
- [Next-generation personalized learning-Knowledge Learning](#)
- [Personalized Learning: What You Need to Know](#) (Understood.org)
- [How to Implement Personalized Learning in the Classroom](#). (Education NC)
- [The Perks of Personalized Pathways and Playlists](#) (GettingSmart.com)
- [Designing Personalized Pathways for Every Learner](#) (GettingSmart.com)

Intervention/Remediation

Remedial programs address learning gaps by reteaching basic skills. They are designed to close the gap between what students know and what they are expected to know. They reteach core skills. Kids who learn and think differently may need more support than what is typically provided in a remedial program. This is especially true if the remedial classes teach the material in the same way it was taught during the school year.

Remediation as the primary way to support students performing below grade level is especially concerning for students with disabilities. It can result in lowered expectations for these students and relegate them to lower "tracks" than their nondisabled peers. IDEA requires the provision of a FAPE for every child. IEPs should be written in ways that create a pathway and roadmap for students to strive for and meet grade-level standards.

"Remediation doesn't work. In fact, it has done damage by locking students into long-term learning gaps that worsen each year. They never catch up." David Steiner, executive director, Johns Hopkins School of Education Institute for Education Policy



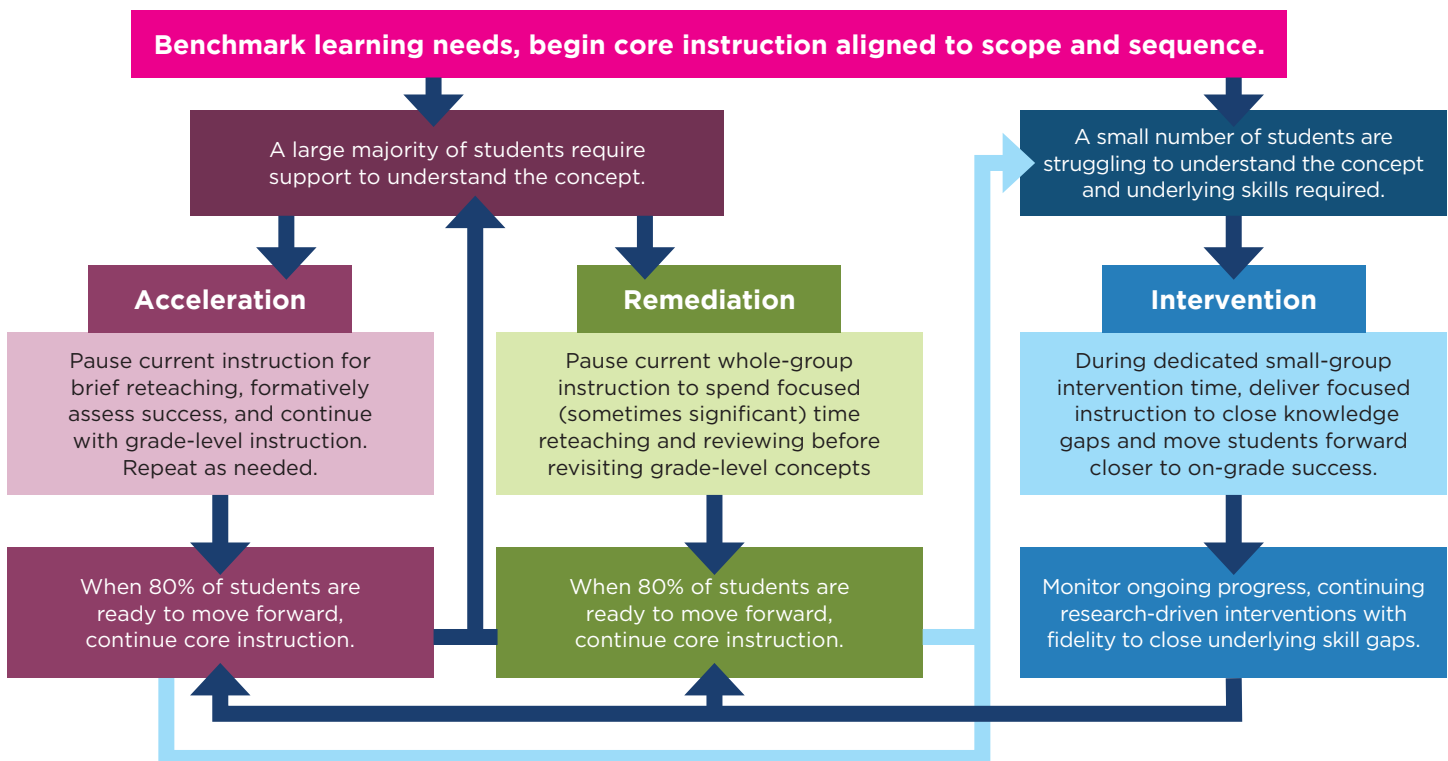
Additional Resources

- [Videos of Remedial Education-Advantages, Disadvantages](#)
- [Remedial and Special Education](#) (SAGE Journals)
- [From Remediation to Acceleration: Early Lessons From Two Philadelphia Back on Track schools](#) (Jobs for the Future)
- [Accelerate Don't Remediate – New Evidence from Elementary Math Classrooms](#) (TNTP.org)
- [To Catch Students Up, Don't Remediate. Accelerate](#) (John Hopkins Institute for Education Policy)

High-Dosage Tutoring

One-on-one or small group instruction is offered three or more times a week and aligned with the rest of the instruction students receive throughout the day.

Acceleration vs. Remediation vs. Intervention



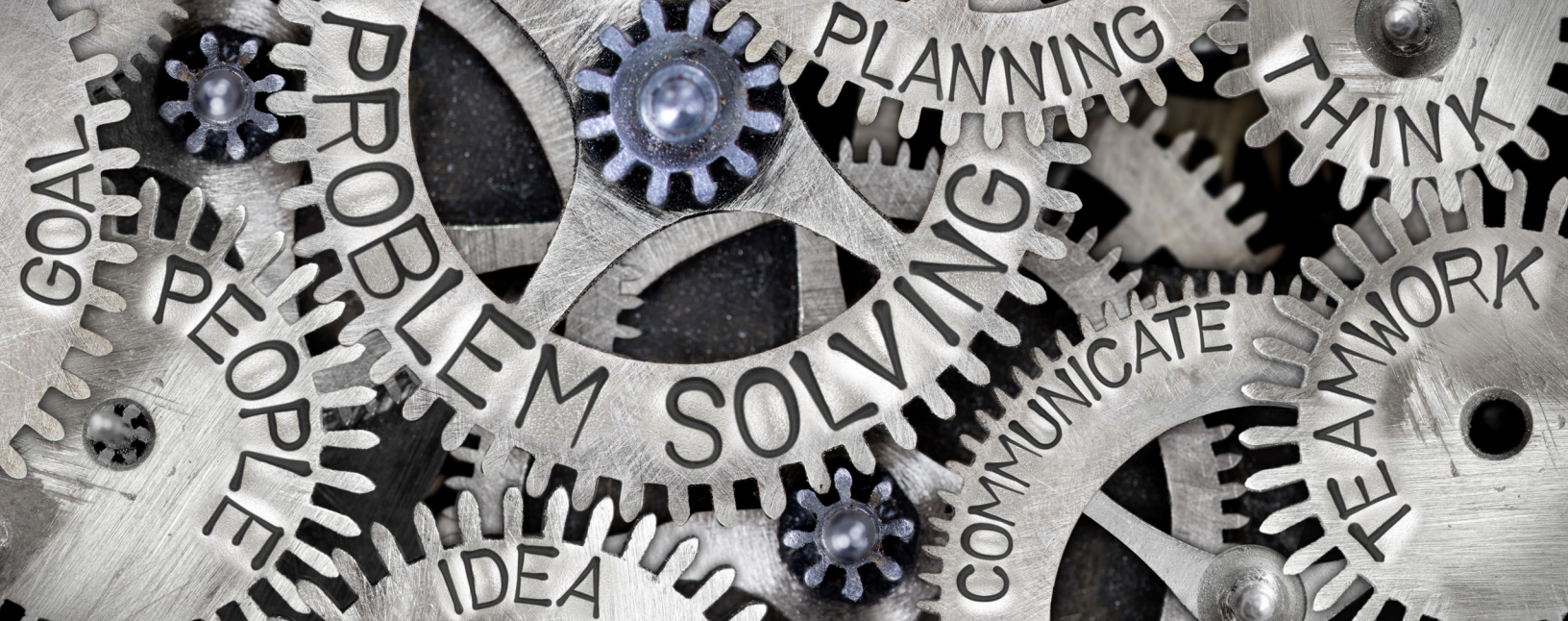
+ EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Building-level administrators are the instructional coaches for all educators in your building. Below are strategies special education teachers should be providing to students in all educational settings. The majority of students with disabilities receive the content instruction in the general education classroom.

Therefore, it is essential that all teachers are implementing instructional strategies that have been shown to work with students with disabilities. The PGS provides a framework to support and grow all educators to feel confident in supporting students with disabilities in the educational setting.

Instructional Coach

Instructional coaches can provide valuable resources to educational leaders. They can help with instructional practices and demonstrations and collaborative decision-making. Not only can they help your students grow and be more successful, but they can also help your teachers grow professionally.



Lesson and Intervention Design and Plans

District and school administrators provide instructional leadership and develop, implement, and evaluate district and school systems and policies. District superintendents and central administration make important decisions that impact all staff. The district provides top-level vision and support. There must be a shared philosophy and vision of inclusive education for all children because you cannot do this school-by-school. The district level provides professional development, on-site technical assistance, and individualized education program (IEP) discussions. The district-level office sets the stage for special education to be embedded in all departments of the education system, not as a stand-alone agency in the district. While all levels of the district, from the superintendent and board to individual teachers, must assume responsibility for promoting inclusive education, principals play a particularly important role. The principals are the leaders to engage in discussions at the school level about what is important to students. Within each school, the principal plays a central role in guiding teachers and supporting staff. When teachers and staff are supported, students are supported. It is critical to focus on adult-to-adult relationships and problem-solving.

Collaborative problem-solving is a process that should be modeled to solve problems

Administrators provide leadership for an inclusive team to shape a collective vision for the school climate and create a long-term plan for realizing this vision. The plan to implement inclusive practices should focus on what the school needs to improve access to learning for all students. The administrator's role in improving access may include facilitating interdisciplinary teaming among teachers, demonstrating high academic expectations for all students, and managing a comprehensive school access plan.

It is critical that all leaders understand the multi-faceted layers of inclusion go far beyond "co-teaching." The co-teaching model was not designed for special education and general education teachers to work together. It was designed for two content teachers to work together to support deeper learning of content subjects. Special education teachers and content teachers must first understand the roles and responsibilities of each professional to all children before they can adapt the co-teaching models to meet the needs of diverse learners. Co-teaching also requires the use of teaching units to be expanded for all grades to have the capacity to implement the co-teaching models with fidelity. The purpose of inclusion is to improve access to social, physical, and intellectual opportunities that allow all students to learn. When you plan for inclusion with a focus on access, it makes small movements with big outcomes. Improving access requires that educators work collaboratively to improve access, with content teachers providing the role of experts in the sequencing of learning and instruction and special educators as the specialist to make adaptations to instruction that focuses on accessibility to learning for all students. General education is the teacher, and special education is a service provider to teachers and students. In this section, we will assist leaders in growing inclusive schools through systems alignment and structured processes that support the growth and development of educators focusing on their unique responsibilities.

Effective Instructional Strategies	Benefit to Students with Disabilities	Resources
Executive Functioning	Educators should teach executive functioning language to all classroom learners, not just those who show deficits. When educators assist students with identifying their executive functioning strengths and areas of need, they also teach them how to advocate for their own needs in the classroom and beyond. Students with executive function challenges often have trouble planning, managing time, and organizing. Accommodations can help students work around these challenges and thrive in the classroom.	• Classroom Accommodations for Executive Function Challenges (Understood.org) • HLP #7: Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment (Exceptionalchildren.org) • The Educator's Guide to Executive Functions: How to Understand and Support Students in Need (Additudemag.com)
Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies	An effective special educator engages in practices that facilitate students' abilities to be more self-directed and strategic learners who can eventually independently identify and achieve their learning and behavioral goals.	• Cognitive Strategy Instruction • Leadership Guide for HLP #14: Teach Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies to Support Learning and Independence
Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback	Special educators use feedback at various levels to improve student learning and promote self-regulation, which leads to expert learners.	• Importance of Providing Meaningful Student Feedback • Leadership Guide for HLP #8: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide Students' Learning and Behavior • 20 Ways to Provide Effective Feedback for Learning
Use Assistive and Instructional Technology	Special education teachers support the use of three distinct types of educational technologies for students with disabilities: (a) assistive technologies (AT), (b) general instructional technologies, and (c) content-specific instructional technologies.	• Bookshare – An e-book library that makes reading easier • Cast – A nonprofit education research and development organization • CommonLit – A comprehensive literacy program • Vocabsupport.com – A library of slides for teachers to use during instruction • AEM Center – The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials for Learning at CAST • Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT) Services • Universal Design for Learning Implementation and Research Network

Adapt Curriculum Tasks and Materials for Specific Learning Goals	Effective teachers select ambitious goals, pinpoint learning strengths and needs, adapt materials and instruction appropriately, and conduct continuous assessments to determine the effectiveness of the adaptation.	• Intervention Central Academic Interventions • Leadership Guide for HLP #13: Adapt Curriculum Materials and Tasks • Three Ways to Build Content Knowledge with Newsela ELA (Video) • Differentiated Instruction Strategies (Readnaturally.com)
Provide Scaffolded Supports	Scaffolded support is provided to students by effective teachers during instruction to help them move toward independence.	• Helping All Learners: Scaffolding EL Education • Intervention Central: Response to Intervention Resources
Use Explicit Instruction	Explicit instruction's effectiveness as a teaching approach for struggling students comes from a strong focus on using instructional behaviors or elements that provide clarity by giving students appropriate levels of support, guidance, and scaffolds, as well as multiple opportunities to respond, followed by effective feedback.	• How to Teach Using Explicit Instruction (Understood.org) • 'Explicit Instruction' Provides Dramatic Benefits in Learning to Read (Association for Psychological Science)
Use Flexible Grouping	Flexible grouping is the effective and efficient use of small, mixed-ability groups to improve educational outcomes for students with, without, and at risk of disabilities.	• Flexible Grouping: A Responsive Strategy to Meet Student Needs in Real Time (National Center for Learning Disabilities) • Differentiated Instruction SmartCard (Kaganonline.com)
Use Strategies to Promote Active Student Engagement	When students frequently respond to a well-designed lesson, three benefits ensue: more learning, less off-task and disruptive behavior, and immediate feedback on the lesson's effectiveness for the teacher.	• Response Card Exchange: A wall for sharing preprinted response card templates and coinciding lessons, video, audio explanations, and examples (Padlet.com) • Active Student Responding: Strategies teachers can use to improve student achievement • How to Improve Student Learning In Every Classroom Now (ScienceDirect.com)
Provide Intensive Intervention Using Data-Based Individualization	A process for collecting additional data to further individualize intervention	• Intensive Intervention Using Data-Based Individualization • Center on PBIS • What is DBI? Learn about NCII's approach to intensive intervention! (National Center on Intensive Intervention)

Teach Students to Maintain and Generalize New Learning Across Time and Settings	Effective teachers must have competency of strategies in order to build generalization and maintenance components into lessons when designing and implementing instruction.	• HLP #21: Teach Students to Maintain and Generalize New Learning Across Time and Settings • Strategies to Improve Generalization (Education.uw.edu)
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Additional Resources:

[Data-Based Instruction: Tools, Learning, and Coaching](#) (The Early Writing Project)

[Data-Based Instruction in Early Writing](#) (University of Missouri College of Education & Human Development Department of Special Education)

[Inclusion of Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Supports in the General Education Classroom](#) (IRIS Center)

Effective Assessments for All Grade Levels and All Content

Assessments are critical for driving eligibility, designing services, and implementing appropriate instructional strategies to help students with disabilities improve outcomes. The chart below provides a list of assessments to consider when planning for students with disabilities. Many will be the same as general education, but some will be specific to special education. While many assessments are specific to a particular grade band or content area, many can provide educational leaders with valuable information across all grades and all content areas.

Type of Assessment	Examples	Purpose for Supporting Students with Disabilities
Norm-referenced tests: Compare students within a similar population used for eligibility and development of PLAAFP	Wechsler Tests: WISC-V, WAIS-V, WPPSI-IV	• Cognitive intelligence • Language • Auditory skills • Visual skills • Motor skills
	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-3)	• Academic skills and achievement
	Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ-IV)	• Academic skills and achievement
	Kaufman Tests of Educational Achievement (KTEA3)	• Academic skills and achievement
	Woodcock-Johnson Scales of Independent Behavior (SIB-R)	• Social maturity and • appropriateness of behavior
	Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS-II)	• Social maturity and • appropriateness of behavior
	Behavioral Assessment System for Children (BASC-3)	• Social/emotional scales
Criterion-referenced tests: Compare students to a predetermined performance level or standard related to a specific skill or concept		• Instructional planning decisions • Developing the PLAAFP • Narrowing down skills to focus on developing aligned to standards

Diagnostic assessments: Provide granular data that address the specificity of sub-skills needed for mastery of broader skills across a continuum of development	• iReady • CORE Phonics Survey	• Developing baseline for IEP goals • Aligning instruction with students' individual learning needs
Curriculum-based assessments: Record the student performance occurring while the student is participating in and learning the designated curriculum		• Determining how long to teach a concept or skill • Student grouping • Altering instruction to bolster student achievement or motivation • Developing personalized instruction to students' individual needs
Curriculum-based measures: Identify when and how to individualize instruction	• Aimsweb • DIBELS	• Progress monitoring • Indicating if the student is responding to intervention • Determining the intensity of support the student requires • Identifying the specific pattern of errors to address in IEP goals
Anecdotal seating charts: Observation tool to learn about students' learning and behavior		• Tracking behaviors (e.g., social emotional and instructional) • Collecting accurate data on opportunities to respond (OTRs) • Students' engagement with peers and content demands • Student grouping • Providing information for PLAAFP
Transition assessments: Required to support development of a transition plan for students by age 14	• Transition Skills Inventory • Brigance Transition Skills Inventory • ONet Interest Inventory	Transition plans

Assessments for Planning and Evaluating Educational Services

Assessment is critical for planning and evaluating the educational services students with disabilities receive. Special educators are generally the stewards of assessment information. They are vital in managing, interpreting, and communicating assessment data. Special educators must understand each assessment’s purpose, assist key stakeholders in understanding how culture and language influence the interpretation of data generated, and use data to collaboratively develop and implement IEPs.

Process	Steps for Special Education Teacher
Interpret Assessment Results	• Gather assessment information and highlight main findings. • Distinguish considerations for culturally and linguistically diverse students. • Identify students’ strengths and needs. • Consider how assessment information impacts accommodations, modifications, and equitable grading practices.
Communicate Assessment Results	• Develop a cheat sheet for assessment results. • Modify the cheat sheet based on the key stakeholder. • Create a plan for communication. • Facilitate collaboration among team members in developing educational and transition plans. • Closely monitor students’ responses to instructional and transition plans.
Considerations for Key Stakeholders	• Understand and examine the context of the classroom, school, and community to ensure equitable opportunities for the student to be successful as determined by the student and their family. • Share, in consultation with the student, appropriate background information and contextual considerations that emphasize the student’s identified strengths and needs. • Request and provide relevant assessment data to each team member based on their roles. • Provide a cheat sheet of the assessment data that will inform the educational and transition plans, which should include easily digestible data interpreted for use during the meeting. • Prepare the student to lead and/or participate in the meeting, particularly in transition planning and subsequent meetings. • Develop a plan for future data collection and use.



+ DATA-BASED INDIVIDUALIZATION (DBI) TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

DBI is a type of DBDM that is intended only for an individual or small group of students and requires close collaboration between the special and general education teachers within an inclusive classroom. Christopher J. Lemons, PhD, suggests that resource pull-out instruction is a disruption to the Response to Intervention MTSS system. Below is the special education teacher's role in developing and implementing DBI.

Role of the Special Education Teacher

1. Establish the present level of performance
2. Set an ambitious long-term goal.
3. Generate a hypothesis to select interventions and implement high-quality instruction with fidelity.
4. Monitor progress toward the long-term goal.
5. Use decision rules to determine the effectiveness of the instruction.
6. Generate a new hypothesis regarding student progress as needed.
7. Implement instructional changes as needed and repeat the steps as required.

Use DBI to Support Behavioral Needs

1. Identify the problem and create a plan.
2. Monitor student progress toward behavioral goals.
3. Establish and implement decision rules.
4. Use technology to support data collection and analysis.

Meeting the needs of diversity in the classroom depends on an educator's effectiveness to analyze assessments to drive instruction and approve access to learning using high-leverage and evidence-based practices to close gaps in learning.

+ EFFECTIVE ROUTINES

Renowned classroom management expert Harry Wong said, "Classroom management is not discipline. It is about being consistent and organized." In education, we know that without consistent procedures, you will not have effective classroom management. So what do effective procedures and classroom management look like? Classroom management deals with how students do their work. Procedures are used to ensure students are productive and successful. Most problems in the class are not discipline related—they are procedure-related. Procedures require two very important components, routine and consistency!

ROUTINE

Effective teachers who have smooth-running classrooms have a classroom management plan in place and teach procedures that become routine.

CONSISTENCY

Consistency in a classroom is created when there is a repetition of actions and tasks—procedures. Consistency lets students know beforehand what to expect and how to perform the classroom procedures.

As a school or district leader, it is important to nurture teachers on how to establish and teach students classroom procedures, which leads to having effective routines. Some methods of doing this would be to encourage teachers to develop procedures for every classroom activity, possibly use the three-step method (Teach, Rehearse, and Reinforce) for teaching a procedure, and finally emphasize the importance of practicing the procedures until they become routine. If the classroom has a special education teacher who provides inclusive support, both teachers must collaborate in this process.

Below are some practice procedures and effective routine development activities teachers can practice while learning how to develop effective classroom procedures and routines:

Sample Procedure 1

Problem

Student C loves working in groups because it gives them time to talk more with their friends in the class. Student C often gets overly excited when working with groups. What can the teacher do?

Solution: Keep Students On-task

This procedure helps with over-active engagement and reminds students to adjust their activities to establish classroom norms and their actions if they are unacceptable. It eliminates noisy, off-task behavior and returns the classroom to an appropriate learning atmosphere. An example strategy is the Stop, Think, Organize, and Proceed (STOP) strategy. Develop procedural steps for your procedure to keep students on-task. Using the three-step teaching classroom procedures, how would you implement the procedure?

Sample Procedure 2

Problem

Student A always rushes to the front of the line and pushes their peers out of the way to be the line leader. Student A loves telling the other students what to do and the attention that comes with it. What should the teacher do?

Solution: Classroom Jobs

This procedure resolves the following problems:

- Doing the daily tasks necessary to keep the classroom clean
- Instilling responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and a sense of pride in their class, leading to a positive learning environment
- Ensuring responsibility and teamwork among students (i.e., ownership)

Examples of tools that can be used: Job wheels, job lists

Develop procedural steps for this procedure. How would you implement the procedure using the three-step teaching classroom procedures?

Sample Procedure 3

Problem

Students A, B, and C sometimes pick on students who are not like them in the classroom, leading to others feeling bullied and not feeling like they are not a part of the class. What can the teacher do?

Solution: Cultivate Social Skills

- Social skills are essential to a positive classroom environment, creating a classroom where everyone practices courtesy and treats one another with dignity and respect. This procedure provides opportunities for effective verbal and nonverbal communication, increased productivity, and a positive classroom atmosphere.
- Develop Procedural Steps for this procedure. How would you implement the procedure using the three-step teaching classroom procedures?

+ BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

“Behavior issues, such as uncontrolled tantrums, aggressive physical behavior, and repetitive emotional outbursts, may interfere with children’s ability to function in school.” ([Behavior Intervention: Definition, Strategies, and Resources | Regis College Online](#)) Specific behavior interventions created to meet students’ needs can decrease inappropriate behaviors, teaching students to use communication as a more positive, appropriate response to challenging situations.

Behavior interventions using antecedent, behavior, and consequence (ABC) strategies can be implemented throughout the school environment. Antecedent strategies are environmental/stimulus changes that happen before the behavior. Behavior strategies are implemented to improve skills by teaching new or replacement skills. Consequence strategies provide reinforcement to increase appropriate behavior or punishment to decrease future inappropriate behavior.

Behavior Interventions Using ABC Strategies		
Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
• Manage physical classroom layout. • Avoid known triggers • Model appropriate skills/language • Use visual schedules/prompts. • Use gestural prompts. • Use first-then language. • Offer choices. • Remember proximity. • Implore behavioral momentum.	• Direct instruction • Differentiated instruction • Modeling behaviors • Role-playing • Task cards/boxes • Social stories • Teacher knowledge of: • Behavioral skills • Communication skills • Social skills • Self-regulation • Self-management	• Reinforcement • Praise • Stickers • Edibles • Access to break • Apologizing • Use of restorative practices • Logical, natural consequences • Punishment (Used as a last option) • Positive practice • Overcorrection • Response cost

Behavior Interventions Strategies:

- Restitution (e.g., repair and restore)
- Appropriate in-school suspension
- Alternative programming (e.g., schedule changes)
- Community service projects
- Minicourses (e.g., social and communication skills)
- Behavior monitoring (e.g., Check-In Check-Out - CICO)
- Behavior contracts/Problem-solving
- Counseling (e.g., school and outside source)
- Functional behavior assessment
- Behavior intervention plans
- Meditation programs

De-escalation

“When conflict reaches the point that a student’s behavior threatens the safety of other students, it becomes even more of a concern.” De-escalation strategies are important for schools to have in place for student disagreements before the situation gets out of control. (Conflict De-Escalation: Strategy Brief, 4-2-2016)

TIPS TO AVOID CRISIS

The following is an abbreviated version of suggestions recommended by the Mayo Clinic staff:

1. Take a time out. Take a few minutes to clear your thoughts.
2. Once you are calm, express your anger.
3. Get some exercise.
4. Think before you speak.
5. Identify possible solutions.
6. Stick with “I” versus “You” statements.
7. Do not hold a grudge.
9. Practice relaxation skills.
10. Know when to seek help.

(Mayo Clinic staff, 2011)

Build Rapport with Student

- Introduce yourself and use the student’s name.
- Create trust.
- Be honest.
- Offer positive options/suggestions.

Active Listening

- Pay attention.
- Try not to interrupt.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- Avoid using the word why.
- Incorporate nonverbal cues (e.g., nodding, etc.).

Paraverbal Communication

- Be mindful of your tone, pitch, and volume.
- Be aware of the tempo of your speech.
- Use positive wording.

Nonverbal Communication

- Remain calm.
- Keep eye contact.
- Be cognizant of facial expression.
- Be aware of body language.
- Notice movement.
- Give space and social awareness.



+ ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Have you ever walked by a store window and thought, “I want to go to in here.” That store created an engaging environment that made you want to come in. We must do the same thing with our schools as students come in. They have to want to be a part of the learning community to be engaged in the learning process. Everyone and every inch of space play a role in creating that engaging learning environment. Some ideas to look into are flexible seating, physical environment, AT, visual content displays, welcoming staff, and clean and well-maintained buildings.

[Top 10 UDL Tips for Designing an Engaging Learning Environment | CAST Professional Learning](#) (CAST.org)

[Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements | National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#) (NCSSLE) (Safesupportivelearning.ed.gov)

Characteristics of an Engaging Learning Environment

Learning Styles

- Inquiry-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Direct instruction
- Differentiated instruction
- Peer-to-peer learning

Safety

School district codes of conduct that promote positive relationships between faculty and students

Flexible Seating

[25 Best Flexible Seating Options for Your Classroom](#) (Weareteachers.com)

Visual Content

Includes English language learners

+ TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

“Social skills can help your students to become better learners and lay the foundation for success in the adult world.” PBIS Blog

In today’s educational climate, teaching social skills has presented itself as a major factor in helping establish a classroom and school culture that promotes learning. Social skills have a tremendous impact on the world of academics. Teaching social skills helps with schools having an increased graduation rate and an increase in college readiness. Over time, enhanced social skills may lead to increased academics, students having greater employment opportunities, and enhanced overall wellness (mental and physical). Teaching social skills does not stop just there with the benefits associated with teaching social skills.

According to PBIS, some benefits of teaching social skills include:

- Improved ability to communicate with others
- Development of self-awareness
- Improved cooperative teamwork
- Ability to set and achieve individual goals
- Development of persistence
- Greater active listening skills
- Improved school climate
- Greater school safety
- Reduced bullying

Development of Social Management Skills

“Students are more likely to be emotionally and intellectually invested in the classes in which they have positive relationships with their teachers.” (Phelan) Research shows that schools with teachers who intentionally build positive student-teacher relationships often experience students who have increased levels of interest in and enjoyment of their class, increased levels of academic achievement (Murray), and a decrease in the occurrence of classroom disruptions (Phelan).

There may be nothing more important in a child’s life than a positive and stable relationship with a caring adult. For students, a positive connection to at least one school adult – whether a teacher, counselor, sports coach, or other school staff member – can have tremendous benefits that include reduced bullying, lower drop-out rates, and improved social emotional capacities. Rather than leave these connections to chance, relationship mapping invests time in making sure that every student is known by at least one adult. How-to Guide to Relationship Mapping (Harvard Graduate School of Education)

Think back to your time in school. Who was your favorite teacher? Why was this person your favorite teacher? Looking back, excellent teachers significantly impacted our lives because they genuinely cared for us. Most of us remember teachers who cared, not because they knew the subject matter being taught, but because they genuinely cared. A key characteristic of teachers who authentically and genuinely care about their students is caring. As a school leader, it is important to model this same characteristic with your teachers. Authentic teacher-student relationships help to develop a culture of respect and learning.



Components of Building Teacher-Student Relationships

Reflect on the four components of building teacher-student relationships and what they mean to you as a leader. What are some barriers that may be preventing authentic teacher-student relationships? What actions do you plan to take to establish all four parts in your school and district to help develop a culture of teacher-student relationships?

Establish rapport

- Seek to learn about and connect with every student as a human being.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn about you and connect with you.
- Use work on content to convey appreciation/regard for students and connect with them.
- Find small moments to connect with students.

Build mutual trust

- Demonstrate trustworthiness.
- Treat students as trustworthy.
- Support students to engage in productive struggle with content and to persevere.
- Invite and seriously consider students' questions, challenges, criticisms, and disagreements without taking them personally.

Monitor and maintain relationships with students

- Establish routines for regularly connecting with students.
- Build communication systems to gather individual student thinking and feedback.
- Develop systems to track the quality and quantity of interactions with individual students.
- Recognize and actively mediate conflict, taking ownership when mistakes are made and adapting behavior based on the needs of the relationship.

Examine and manage self in relationships with students

- Attend to who you are outside of the classroom.
- Attend to who you are as a professional inside the classroom.
- Examine your personality, interrogate your biases, and identify deficiencies in terms of how they might impact relationships with individual students.
- Attend to how you express yourself.



+ PEER TUTORING AND FLEXIBLE GROUPING

Peer tutoring is when students teach other students academics, social skills, and appropriate behavioral strategies. [What Is Peer Tutoring? What is it? Is It Good? Pros & Cons](#) (EduReviewer.com)

- **ClassWide Peer Tutoring (CWPT):** The entire class is put into groups of two or five students with differing ability levels. Students then act as tutors, tutees, or both tutors and tutees. [Classwide Peer Tutoring: The “Standard” Program](#) (KU Department of Special Education)
- **Cross-age peer tutoring:** Older students are paired with younger students to teach or review a skill. The positions of tutor and tutee do not change. The older student serves as the tutor, and the younger student is the tutee.
- **Peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS):** The teacher pairs students who need additional instruction or help with a peer who can assist students who need additional instruction or help with a peer who can assist. [Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies](#) (What Works Clearing House)
- **Reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT):** Two or more students alternate between acting as the tutor and tutee during each session, with equitable time in each role. Often, higher-performing students are paired with lower-performing students. [Reciprocal Peer Tutoring: Definition & Effects](#) (Study.com)

Flexible Grouping - Flexible grouping is pairing students into groups. Flexible grouping connects students socially, shows students new and different perceptions, and reduces status distinctions. [How to Use Flexible Grouping in the Classroom](#) (TeachThought.com)

Characteristics of flexible grouping:

- Teacher-led/student-led
- Assigned or selected
- Made up of the same or different skills
- Can be partners, small groups, and large groups
- “Turn and talks”
- Learning centers
- Groups with defined roles (e.g., facilitator, timekeeper, writer, reader)

FLEXIBLE GROUPING “WARM UP”

Day 1/Grouping 1

Students line up according to birth date (month/day), and the teacher divides them into partners.

Day 2/Grouping 2

Students receive a playing card and form “same suit” trios.

Day 3/Grouping 3

Students use the same playing card (or a new one) to form “like number” quads.

Day 4/Grouping 4

Students form “four corners” groups by reporting to the area of the room that corresponds to their favorite food: pizza, burgers, tacos, or smoothies; they subdivide into trios or quads.

Day 5/Grouping 5

Students line up in ROY G BIV order according to clothing color. The teacher “folds” the line to give students a partner from the opposite end of the spectrum.

+ PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Having or creating inclusive schools is not a theory; it is a belief system that all students are valued members of the school community, which must be demonstrated through daily actions and decisions. A belief is difficult to use to shift practices within a school because it is easy to become overwhelmed. Changing a culture must start from within the environment. Therefore, leaders must consider how they support the paradigm shift through professional development plans and topics.

As shown in this guidebook, it is critical to focus on aligning systems and building instructional practices that make learning accessible to all learners. The first step in the process is to make the primary focus of your districts and schools to make learning accessible to all students. The teachers need to see a clear message from the top to the bottom.

Using grade-level teams (as much as possible with high school), you should allow them to develop inclusive action plans that require them to evaluate data, identify where they need support, and determine the outcomes they expect to see at the end of the year. Continuous meetings will review data to identify if the plan is working and allow them to adjust as needed. The team determines the professional development needed to advance their goal. As the leader, you work with them to secure professional development with expectations and time for educators to implement the practices with peer review and self-reflection. The targeted approach builds the team's ability to serve all learners in Universal Tier I instruction that provides access to learning for all students. The MDE offers professional development coordinators to assist the district or school in developing a strategic plan and/or grade-level teams in developing the action plans. In the future, the MDE will have a website for inclusive schools to support resources from this document with additional professional development resources.

Inclusive schools should focus on improving access. Districts and schools may consider using coaching to improve accessibility for all students. The National Center for Intensive Intervention has a section on coaching procedures aligned with implementation science ([Implementation Guide for Effective Coaching of Teachers - National Center on Intensive Intervention](#)). The MDE Office of Special Education has options for assisting districts and schools in developing inclusion action plans and coaching to improve accessibility through team and individual coaching for the implementation of high-leverage practices.

Common Questions Regarding Inclusive Professional Development

Which, if any, of the following are permissible uses of IDEA funds: (a) professional development opportunities for educators, (b) planning/release time for educators funding all or part of the salary of an additional classroom aide?

Determinations of whether the expenditures listed above would be permissible expenditures of IDEA funds must be made on a case-by-case basis. In general, the expenditures listed above could be permissible expenditures of IDEA funds if the school district responsible for the student's education determines they would be necessary for students to receive FAPE or, if all eligible children are receiving a FAPE, to meet other IDEA requirements. In all instances, the expenditures are reasonable for the proper and efficient administration of IDEA and must be expended with the cost principles applicable to the IDEA program. The expenditures must be included in the school district's application for IDEA funds submitted and approved by the MDE.

What information on professional development/training approaches have special and general educators and paraprofessionals found helpful in implementing inclusion and other educational practices when addressing the needs of students with disabilities?

Focus on strategies that support collaborative planning and problem-solving (i.e., team plans), site-based control, curriculum and technological adaptations and modifications, parent and family involvement, and creative use of human and fiscal resources. The important factor to remember is timely access to resources as they are needed.

Additional Resource: This [Staff Development Survey](#) (Inclusive Schools Network) can help you determine professional development topics you might need to consider in moving toward inclusive schools.

+ UNDERSTANDING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICIES/MANDATES REGARDING IDENTIFYING AND EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Federal legislation supports effective inclusive principal leadership as a strategy for improving learning conditions in all schools, especially those targeted for improvement under ESSA. This guidebook supports integrating leader development and school improvement efforts to improve student outcomes.

Federal laws can be complicated, and the rules for inclusion are no exceptions. Inclusive leaders ensure compliance without having to learn all of the ins and outs of the inclusion mandate in federal law by doing the following:

1. Think of children with disabilities first and foremost, wanting and needing all the same developmental and educational opportunities as children who are developing typically.
2. Do whatever you can—provide any aids and services—to prevent separating children with disabilities from their peers in placement, in what they are taught, or in any other activities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA articulates the rights of students with disabilities and the services that must be provided to them in elementary and secondary school. IDEA is the primary support for inclusion. It specifically requires schools to support the inclusion of children with disabilities through the least restrictive and natural environment mandates. IDEA supports inclusion in three of the following areas:

1. IDEA does not require inclusion; however, the regulations address LRE—placement of the child with children who do not have disabilities. Schools should educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom in the school they would attend if not disabled. The regulations mandate instruction of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible (§1412(a)(5) and §1413(a)(1)). For children 3-21 years of age, the LRE includes a continuum of placements (§ 1412(a)(5)) from fully inclusive (the general education classroom) to fully separate (special school) with a lot of different options between, such as the use of a part-time resource room.
2. IDEA ensures students with a disability are provided with FAPE tailored to their individual needs. It ensures access to the standard educational or developmental curriculum. The overall goal is to provide students with disabilities the same opportunity for education as other students.
3. IDEA supports participation in typical nonacademic activities. Specific court cases have supported the social benefits of inclusion. For example, the opportunity to make friends and increase acceptance among their peers (*Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education*, 1989; *Sacramento City School District v. Rachel H.*, 1994).



**Individuals with
Disabilities
Education
Act**



Highlights

- Zero reject: Locate, identify, and provide services to all eligible students with disabilities.
- Protection in evaluation: Schools must conduct nondiscriminatory assessments to determine if a student has an IDEA-related disability.
- Free appropriate public education: Schools must develop and deliver an individualized education program of special education services that offers meaningful educational benefit.
- LRE: Students with disabilities must be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Procedural safeguards: Schools must comply with IDEA's procedural requirements.
- Parental participation: Schools must collaborate with families in the development and delivery of their child's special education program.

Support of Inclusion

[Sec. 300.114 LRE Requirements](#)

(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 general education 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.

Funding

Funding under Part B of IDEA can be used to provide professional development. Grants under Part D of IDEA can be used to provide training and support for evidence-based strategies.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Highlights

ESSA includes provisions that help ensure success for students and schools, including upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-needs students.

ESSA requirements for assessment of all students.

Support of Inclusion

ESSA requires that students with disabilities be involved and make progress in the same general education curriculum that is taught to students without disabilities.

Funding

Help the school implement evidence-based interventions that will lead to improvement.

If your school or district falls within the group of schools and districts that need to make improvements, you can use ideas from this guide as part of your strategy to improve outcomes and use Title I funds to make needed changes.

Title II secures a funding stream to provide professional development for school leaders and educators on these evidence-based strategies found in this guidebook.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Highlights

ADA requires schools and agencies to provide equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

ADA gives protection against discrimination for individuals with disabilities in public programs, even those that do not receive federal financial support.

ADA protects the rights of students with disabilities in K-12 and postsecondary schools by Section 504 and ADA.

Support of Inclusion

ADA provides support to students with disabilities to have access to general education curricula, standards, and settings.

Funding

If an OCR complaint is filed, it can cost the district monetary reimbursement, not just services.



ADA Americans with Disabilities Act

+ BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROFESSIONALS AND FAMILIES

Administrators should build a collaborative, unified school culture focused on inclusion that requires educators to 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. School collaboration is when teachers work together to diagnose what they need to do, plan and teach interventions, and evaluate their effectiveness. Content teachers 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 shift to inclusive instructional practices aligns systems and clarifies roles and responsibilities to ensure all students make academic and social gains. Leaders must ask, “How can we ensure each student with a disability has equitable access to the school community, curriculum, and activities as able-bodied students?” For inclusion to be successful, program quality must be high, and support services must be properly planned. Successful inclusion is good for all students, and effective teaching is an effective intervention for all students.

Schools and families should be working in close collaboration and partnership for the best interest of students. Families collaborating closely with their student’s schools can be a valuable asset.

- Create regular opportunities to mutually share information about a child’s learning and development.
- Ensure constant two-way communication and collaboration between families and school staff.
- Work with families in constructing goals, monitoring progress, and supporting learning.
- Encourage family involvement in the school.
- Offer opportunities for families to receive leadership training, coaching, or mentoring to enhance their leadership and advocacy skills.
- Include families as partners in school organizations, advisory panels, and committees.
- Offer families opportunities to visit their children’s schools and find ways to recruit and train family members to work in the schools.
- Collect ongoing feedback from students and families about their experiences of collaboration with the school.
- Link students and families to trauma-related resources in the school and community when needed.
- Provide or connect families to community supports (e.g., connections to parenting programs; education and services on relevant topics, such as child development, violence, and mental health).
- Support family connections (e.g., provide parent partner, peer, parent support programs or opportunities).
- Identify and work to remove potential barriers to parent participation.
- Provide student and family engagement training for staff (e.g., helping parents understand child data; informing parents of their rights; giving parent feedback on child needs; helping families support learning at home; promoting child development, learning, and wellness).
- Integrate core competencies related to student and family engagement into existing competency frameworks.
- Develop formal processes for continuous improvement related to student and family engagement (e.g., family satisfaction, assessments of the quality of relationships, discussion of screenings and assessments, number of professional development activities with family engagement focus, changes in family engagement practices).

Adapted from [9. Strategies for Collaboration](#) (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments)

+ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

MDE identifies schools for additional assistance and support, which includes professional development, leadership coaching, additional funding, and assistance to support the school's transformation goals. These schools need the most assistance for their students to have the same opportunities for growth and success that exist for students in other schools. The Office of School Improvement (OSI) supports the systemic improvement and turnaround efforts of the lowest-performing schools.

ESSA, a federal law, requires that each state identify schools for support and improvement:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)
- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

Many of these identifications are impacted by a school's students with disabilities data.

It is imperative to remember that all students with disabilities are general education students first and then have additional protections under IDEA and should be held to high expectations. All research shows high-quality Tier 1 instruction is the number 1 predictor of student success. Students with disabilities receiving special education services must be educated to the greatest extent possible with their nondisabled peers. Ensuring that all students are held to high expectations and provided with the appropriate supports will help improve the outcomes of all students.



+ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Specially Designed Instruction Guidance Document

High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities

TIES Center

UDL Resources

MTSS Guidance Document

Dyslexia Support Guide

[The Early Writing Project](http://earlywritingproject.org): A collaborative effort among researchers at the University of Minnesota, the University of Missouri, and school districts and teachers in both states that provides research-based tools (assessments, intervention materials, and decision-making guides), learning modules (face-to-face workshops), and coaching (virtual and on-site) to support teachers' use of DBI for students with intensive early writing needs. (earlywritingproject.org)

[Data-Based Instruction in Early Writing: Tools, Learning, and Collaborative Support \(DBI-TLC\)](https://education.missouri.edu/special-education/projects-centers/dbitlc): Provides a framework for teachers to individualize instruction systematically and effectively. Researchers have demonstrated that when teachers implement DBI with fidelity, their instructional decision-making improves, and student achievement increases. (education.missouri.edu/special-education/projects-centers/dbitlc)

[EBI Network: Supporting the Use of Evidence-Based Interventions in Schools](http://education.missouri.edu/ebi): The extensive resource base includes evidence-based intervention (EBI) briefs, video modeling of EBIs, and information on selecting and using EBI. Each of these resources was developed in collaboration with faculty and students from various universities. (education.missouri.edu/ebi)

+ NOTES:

