Guidebook for Inclusive Practice
A Resource for Communicating About Inclusion

Introduction

Our school/district is committed to **providing a high-quality public education to <u>every</u> child**, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, cultural background, sexual orientation, exposure to trauma, or disability status. As the needs of our students become ever more diverse, the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments continues to grow. **<u>Inclusion</u>** is not necessarily a placement or a setting—it involves the implementation of systems and processes that allow **all students** to learn within an educational community.[1]

> ### What is Inclusion?
> Inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for all students, with and without disabilities, in general education settings.

Benefits of Inclusion

With inclusion, students and parents can expect:

- Greater access to content
- Increased academic performance
- More opportunities to engage with peers
- Levels of support are determined, or tiered, according to student need
- Instruction tailored to individual student needs and learning styles
- A team of educators working collaboratively to plan, implement and evaluate students' educational programs

With Inclusion, There are Real Results

- In Massachusetts, a student with a learning disability who is educated in a full inclusion setting is nearly **five** times as likely to graduate on time as one who is educated in a substantially separate setting.

- Students with disabilities in full inclusion settings, on average, perform better on standardized tests, such as MCAS, than students with similar disabilities in substantially separate classrooms.

- Students with disabilities who had full inclusion placements were less likely to move to out-of-district placements than students educated in substantially separate settings.

- On the whole, students with disabilities who have full inclusion placements appear to outperform similar students who are not included to the same extent in general education classrooms.[2]

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[1] MA DESE, Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice; 2015
[2] Hehir et al, Review of Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: A Synthesis Report; 2014

To offer suggestions, pose questions, or receive updates, please email EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu.

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What will my school district do to make inclusion work for my child?

Districts committed to inclusion use multiple strategies to ensure that every child is able to access the academic and social learning experiences in a meaningful way. **Collaboration** among educators and with families is essential in order to ensure the success of the inclusive setting. Education teams (parents, students, teachers, paraeducators, administrators) must develop consistent expectations and common language so that the following programs and strategies can be successfully implemented.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an organizational framework teacher teams use to design curriculum and learning experiences, ensuring that all students will have the ability to access them at the appropriate level and modality.

Data Cultures are an essential element of successful inclusive settings. Teacher teams who regularly collaborate to review multiple data sources are able to flexibly adapt to student needs. By differentiating the instructional strategy, content, or products of learning students are able to continuously develop essential content knowledge and skills.

Data cultures also inform the development of **multi-tiered systems of academic support**. This is an organizational system for educators to make instructional decisions based on individual student needs. Teacher teams plan lessons knowing that ALL students will get great instruction, SOME students will need extra supports, and A FEW students will need more intensive supports.

These systems provide teacher teams with an organizing structure around **interventions & extensions**, allowing flexibility in meeting individual needs as students learn and grow.

Multi-tiered systems of social supports, like **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** create clear expectations and provide structured strategies, empowering students to meet those expectations.

Resources

More about UDL: http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines_theorypractice

More about PBIS: http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/pbis.pdf

More about Social Emotional Learning: http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/sel.pdf

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