

Using Best Practices for Inclusion to Teach All Students

This FACT Folio highlights five practices that can address the portion of section 1003.57, Florida Statutes (F.S.) regarding universal education. It is essential that teachers and administrators have knowledge and support to enable them to effectively teach all children.

To provide universal education, there is a need to expand educational practices to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Students with disabilities are general education students first and represent a subset within this larger population of student learners. As teachers develop skills in meeting the needs of all learners by using Universal Design for Learning (UDL), we can draw from the established body of research to leverage best practices for inclusion of students with disabilities.

It is important to understand that the concept of inclusion is not an add-on to other initiatives of school improvement, but is rather a broader educational approach. Inclusion integrates demonstrated best practices. It is more than just a special education concern.

Ultimately, inclusion supports learning for all students. Maximizing the potential of each individual begins with fostering a collaborative inclusive environment for all students, including students with disabilities. Systemic support, collaboration, effective classroom practices, family and community partnerships, and UDL can make inclusive education work so that students with disabilities have the same educational, social, and future opportunities as their peers.



“ALMOST 30 YEARS OF RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES CAN BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE BY HAVING HIGH EXPECTATIONS ... AND ENSURING THEIR ACCESS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM, TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.”

20 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1400 ~ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Let's examine five best practices for inclusion.

FIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSION

1. LEADERSHIP

For inclusion to thrive, school and district leaders should promote a sense of responsibility and shared ownership for the academic growth and well-being of every student across the school community. Understanding what inclusion is, and isn't, is the beginning of this vision.

Inclusion **IS** ...

- An individual right
- All students learning together regardless of labels
- An atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging, acceptance, and individual worth
- Collaborative, integrated services by education teams
- Supports and adaptations within the general education curriculum and settings
- Highly effective, research-based instruction and assessment

In other words, it's quality education for all students.

Inclusion **IS NOT**...

- Educators working in isolation
- Grouping students by ability
- Scheduling students into general education classrooms without supports for students and teachers
- Lowering expectations
- Expecting all students to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way

We must hold high standards for all students with and without disabilities.

School and district leaders are also charged with ensuring that evidence-based inclusive practices are implemented effectively for all students in general education settings for a majority of the day – including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, as appropriate. Strong leaders understand that complex change takes time. It also requires skill development on the part of everyone involved in the change, the provision of resources to encourage new practices, and development and communication of a collaborative plan of action to achieve sustainable change.

2. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND STRUCTURE

In an inclusive school, all students are welcomed and seen as contributing and valued members of the school community. Positive relationships among staff, families and students are a focus of creating an inclusive school climate.

As a school becomes more inclusive, the administrators, teachers and support staff involved will find that their roles and responsibilities shift. This shift of roles and responsibilities leads to a shift in the structure of how the school runs.

All individuals who work with students with and without disabilities should participate in high-

quality, job-embedded professional development so that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to improve the academic achievement and skills of students with disabilities.

Job-embedded opportunities might include activities such as mentoring, modeling, professional learning communities, data analysis, or product examination. The importance of job-embedded opportunities is that learning is grounded in day-to-day practice and allows a direct connection between learning and application.

3. COLLABORATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Collaboration is a key variable in the successful implementation of inclusive education. For inclusive education to work, educators must be effective collaborative team members. Teams develop skills in collaborative teaming processes, collaborative teaching, and interpersonal communication that enable them to work together to develop learning opportunities for students who have a wide range of interests, learning styles, and intelligences (Thousand & Nevin, 2016).

Educators in inclusive schools collaborate to plan for instruction using the academic achievement standards and alternate academic achievement standards to minimize curricular barriers, to

provide access to the general curriculum and to proactively problem solve. The implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and a multi-tiered system of student supports (MTSS) will address learning and behavioral needs and promote an inclusive environment.

Maintaining high standards for students with disabilities is one of the best ways to increase student performance. Students with disabilities who have access to high-quality instruction and receive needed supports and services in general education classrooms not only learn more, but are better prepared to lead productive and independent adult lives.



4. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A school becomes an integral part of the local community when families, schools and community agencies are partners. These partnerships ensure that parents of students, especially those with disabilities, benefit from meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

Communication with varied stakeholders should be in multiple formats, including verbal, print or

electronic, and it should meet the mutual needs of the communicators. The focus of each collaboration is determined by the participants, such as individual conferences, advisory councils, support at home, job shadowing or volunteering. In general, families and community agencies should express needs, ideas or suggestions, and schools should seek out ways for their students with and without disabilities to expand their knowledge and skills.



FIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSION

continued

5. STUDENT PLACEMENT

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams for students with disabilities must first consider the general education classroom with a full range of supplementary aids and services. Providing an array of services across the continuum of placements ensures that exceptional student education is a service for students with disabilities rather than a place where children are sent.

With this in mind, general educators should be prepared and expect to teach students with a full range of disabilities in their classrooms. Inclusive schools implement a student-centered scheduling process to facilitate the

provision of appropriate specially designed instruction, related services, and aids and supports in the general education setting for students with disabilities.

Accessibility through the development and use of technology, including assistive technology devices and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and services, leads to more flexible learning environments. Natural and formalized peer supports for students with disabilities in the general education setting are also an inclusive best practice, with many lifelong benefits for the students and educators involved.

THE CONTENT OF THIS F.A.C.T. FOLIO SUPPORTS MULTIPLE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT BPIE ASSESSMENT INDICATORS.

School BPIE
Indicators

District BPIE
Indicators



Use the QR codes below to access the BPIE Indicators-at-a-Glance.

Consider how the information in this F.A.C.T. Folio can be used for planning improvement efforts for the priority indicators selected by your school or district.



**Contact
Us!**

For more information or assistance related to planning for best practices for inclusion on your campus, please contact your Florida Inclusion Network facilitator or visit:

www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com

