

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: A Guidebook for Supporting Students With Disabilities



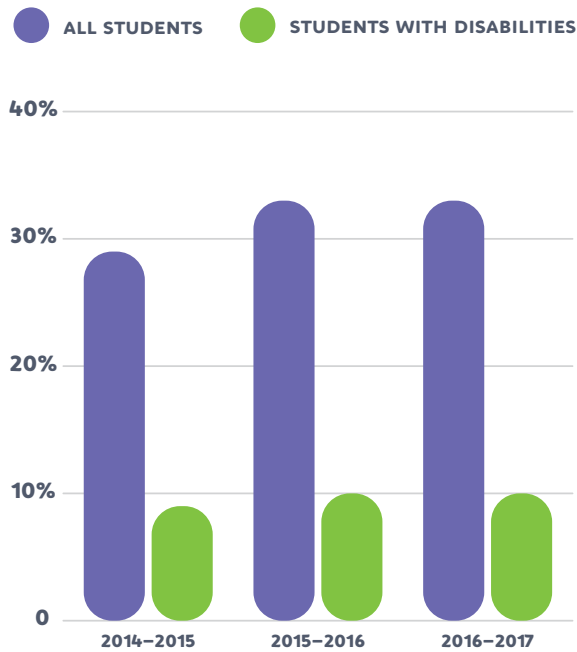
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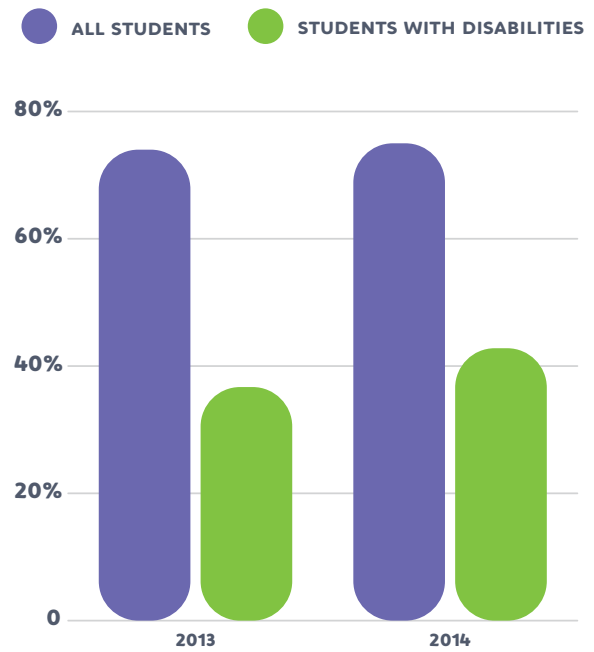
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Nowhere is the challenge for fulfilling the promise of academic achievement greater than in our work with diverse learners. All students deserve an education that prepares them for postsecondary success and a lifetime of unlimited opportunity, and Louisiana educators are [leading the nation](#) in raising the expectations for what all students can learn and achieve through designing and delivering standards-aligned instruction. Despite this overall progress, the performance of students with disabilities in Louisiana lags behind that of other students. Data show achievement gaps across all disability classifications, and these gaps have persisted over time.

PERCENT STUDENTS SCORING MASTERY ON LEAP 2014–2016 (ENGLISH, MATH, SCIENCE)



PERCENT STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED IN 2013 & 2014 WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



Our challenge is to eliminate the barriers to student success by building a seamless support system. Achieving this vision will require all educators – from school system leaders and principals to classroom teachers – to embrace policies and practices that guarantee high-quality educational experiences for the most vulnerable learners.

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide principals and school system leaders with resources to create strong support plans. It is organized around four proven strategies for improving the academic achievement of students with disabilities:

1. **Identify disabilities early and accurately;**
2. **Provide high-quality instruction to ensure the achievement of ambitious IEP goals;**
3. **Strengthen instruction with specialized supports and related services;**
4. **Coordinate effective transition planning and implementation.**

Improving Outcomes for STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



STRATEGY ONE: IDENTIFY DISABILITIES EARLY AND ACCURATELY



The first strategy for achieving ambitious goals for students with disabilities is ensuring they are identified as early and as accurately as possible.

ELEMENTS OF IDENTIFICATION	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
<p>Coordinate identification</p>	<p>To identify students EARLY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose and administer a screening assessment to every child upon entry into the system: child care, prekindergarten, or kindergarten. • Schedule regular diagnostic screenings for every child: cognitive, speech/language, social/emotional, fine/gross motor and vision/hearing. <p>To identify students ACCURATELY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a School Building Level Committee (SBLC) to review assessment data and make recommendations for instruction and intervention. • Enact a comprehensive screening and intervention plan. • Educate staff on the administration of screening assessments and how to use them effectively. • Provide professional development for all teachers regarding the screening and intervention process. 	<p>Early Childhood Developmental Screenings Guidebook</p> <p>K-2 Assessment Flowchart</p> <p>Alphabetical Table of Screening and Evaluation Tools (pre-K - 12)</p> <p>Birth to 5 Compendium of Screening Measures (USDHH)</p> <p>Pre-K-3 Instructional Guidebook</p>
<p>Communicate with families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host events to educate parents on developmental milestones and the screening process. • Use traditional methods and social media to provide parents with referral, screening, and evaluation information. • Set up regular meetings with the parents of identified students to share results and identify next steps. 	<p>Early Childhood Developmental Screenings Guidebook</p>
<p>Collaborate with partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community agencies to train staff on screening and referral processes. • Join EarlySteps transition meetings to discuss screening, evaluation, and next steps. • Provide referral, screening, and evaluation information to area pediatricians, early childhood medical professionals, and community agencies such as homeless shelters. • Connect with universities and other agencies to identify trained personnel for the pupil appraisal team. • Work collaboratively with pupil appraisal team to identify effective assessments. 	<p>Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies</p> <p>Pupil Appraisal Handbook</p>

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

Early identification leads to [early intervention](#), which improves student achievement. Research has shown that students who receive early and appropriate support are less likely to experience persistent academic difficulties. Schools should partner with area pediatricians, day care centers, and other agencies that serve young children in order to educate parents about important developmental milestones. Schools and school systems coordinate [early childhood](#) and the [special education screening](#) processes so that a comprehensive approach is used to identify effective interventions. Families and agencies working with young children in the community should have clear information about how and when to refer children for whom there are concerns. [Diagnostic screenings](#) should be scheduled regularly and administered by members of an early childhood pupil appraisal team. As noted in the [Pre-K Through Third Grade Guidebook](#), developmental issues may emerge in early childhood but may not necessarily persist; a [pupil appraisal](#) team that is experienced in working with young children—consisting of at least an educational diagnostician, school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and social worker—is best suited to identify when [interventions](#) may suffice and when a more [formal evaluation](#) is required.

ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION

Schools and school systems must also identify students accurately in order to recommend and provide the right kind of services and supports. One challenge is determining if learning differences and delays are temporary, the result of inadequate instruction, or the result of a true disability.

For example,



A PRESCHOOL-AGE STUDENT who is not meeting developmental milestones may simply require *additional supports in the classroom until he matures.*



A FOURTH-GRADER who is not progressing at anticipated rates due to a persistent lack of exposure to high-quality instruction may need *temporary, targeted interventions to meet her needs.*

FOR BOTH STUDENTS,
a formal evaluation for a disability
is NOT the only or best solution.

Schools must enact a comprehensive screening and intervention plan to accurately identify when and why a student is struggling and determine the support. At a minimum, this plan should include the following elements:

	REQUIRED ELEMENT	WHO?	WHAT DATA?	WHEN?	
DATA FROM EACH PRECEDING STEP INFORMS THE NEXT STEP	Low-intensity supports and interventions	Classroom teacher in identified area of need	<u>Universal screener</u> , formative assessments, summative assessments	As soon as needs are identified	STUDENTS PROCEED TO THE NEXT STEP IN THE PLAN AS IDENTIFIED NEEDS PERSIST
	Diagnostic assessments	<p><u>School Building Level Committee</u></p> <p>Required: school administrator, general education classroom teacher, referring teacher, student (as appropriate), parent or guardian, personnel trained to administer diagnostic assessment(s)</p> <p>Recommended: interventionist, school counselor, school social worker, special education teacher, assessment</p>	All of the data above plus attendance and behavior data and vision/hearing screening	As soon as there is evidence that low-intensity classroom supports and interventions have been implemented but are not sufficient	
	<p>Develop intervention plan that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> includes targeted <u>pre-referral interventions</u> in identified area(s) of need is implemented with fidelity supplements but does not replace high-quality grade-level instruction 	All of the above plus the educator(s) who will implement the intervention(s)	All of the above data plus results of age-appropriate, valid and reliable <u>diagnostic assessment(s)</u>	As soon as diagnostic assessment(s) is complete (develop plan)	
	<p>Monitor intervention plan to determine next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discontinue the intervention (student no longer at-risk) continue or adjust intervention (student is making progress) refer for a formal evaluation (student is not making progress) 	All of the above	All of the above data plus results of progress monitoring assessment(s)	At least every 3-4 weeks	
	Formal evaluation plan to determine if the referred student has a disability	<u>IEP Team</u> and Pupil Appraisal Team	All of the above data plus diagnostic assessments/evaluations recommended by pupil appraisal team in suspected area of disability (with informed consent of parent/guardian)	As soon as there is sufficient evidence that the <u>interventions</u> are not effective or as determined appropriate by the <u>SBLC</u>	

This process is **not intended to delay** the evaluation of a student with a suspected disability, nor should it supersede the input of parents, members of the IEP team, or other professionals who serve the student. The process should, however, provide a clear picture of who needs to be included in the pupil appraisal team, target the specific areas that need to be evaluated, and produce a more thorough and comprehensive **formal evaluation process**.

STRATEGY 1 IMPLICATIONS FOR A STRONG IEP

Early and accurate identification allows the IEP team to clearly determine the student's **present level of academic and functional performance** (PLAAFP). IEP goals are more meaningful and effective when linked to an accurate PLAAFP.

Spotlight: Early and Accurate Identification

PLAQUEMINES PARISH

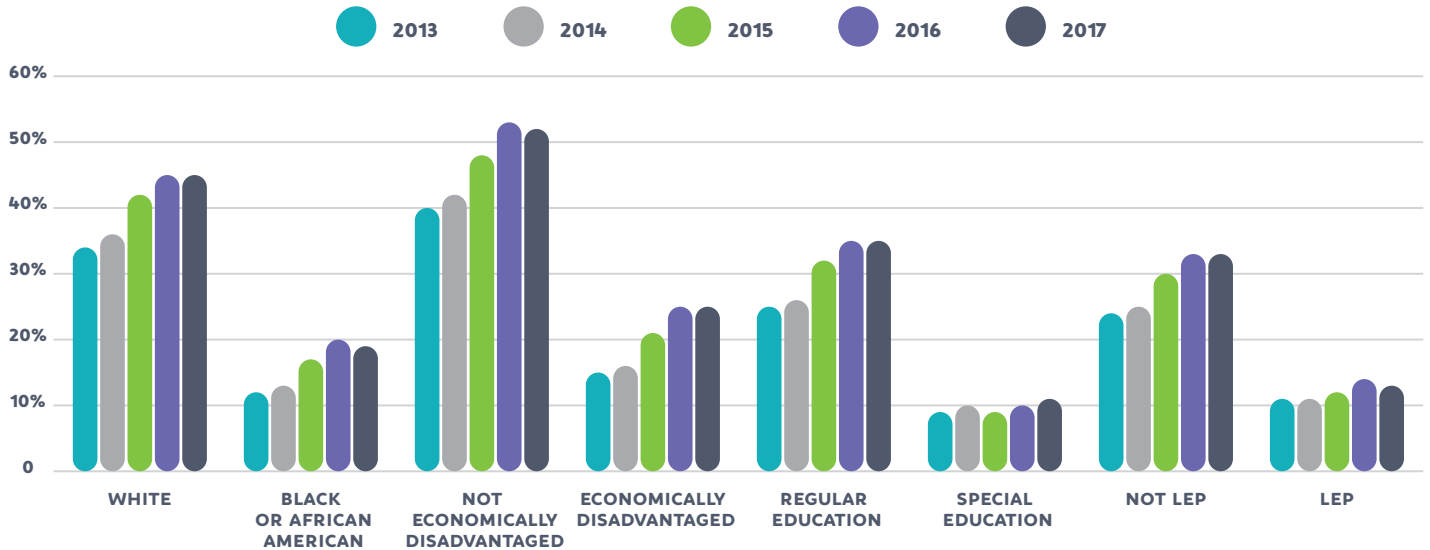
“Plaquemines’ strong outreach program for birth to three-year [includes] developmental flyers at daycares and local businesses, information on PPSB website, Early Steps Region I Quality Outreach Participation, and Early Steps referrals. For the three through five population, Child Find Development Clinics are conducted several times per year, preschool recruitment is held, vision and hearing screenings are conducted, benchmark/universal screening data is collected throughout the year to assess skills and student growth starting in Headstart and preschool, and Preschool Intervention Team meetings are also held monthly. There is true collaboration across disciplines to ensure that all children’s needs are addressed and being met as early as possible.”

STRATEGY TWO: PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AMBITIOUS IEP GOALS



Although we have seen significant gains in overall student achievement over the past several years, there is still more to do.

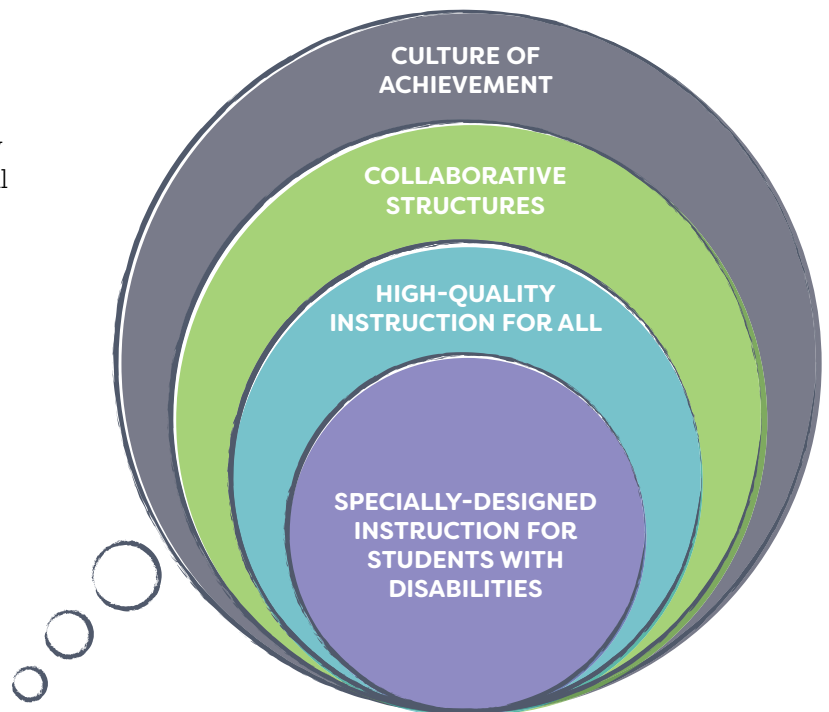
PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING MASTERY ON LEAP (ELA, MATH, & SCIENCE)



We cannot dismiss these gaps in achievement as the result of students' disabilities. The second strategy for achieving ambitious goals for students with disabilities is to build a culture in which teachers provide [high-quality instruction](#) that meets the needs of every student.

CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Students thrive when adults carefully plan and faithfully uphold a culture of achievement and support. Schools play an important role helping their staff believe in the potential of each student. This occurs when all of the adults in the building share the responsibility for the achievement of every student, including those with disabilities. In these schools, teachers collaborate to solve complex problems, all students receive high-quality instruction, and students with disabilities receive [specially-designed instruction](#). This requires intentional structures and use of resources to encourage collaboration across disciplines, grade levels, and areas of expertise.



ELEMENTS OF A CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Build structures to increase collaboration among educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide weekly, common planning time for general and special education teachers. • Include special education teachers in training on standards, curriculum, and assessments. • Provide training for general education teachers on interpreting IEPs and implementing instructional accommodations. 	10 Steps To Implementing Inclusive Practices Finding Time For Collaboration Finding Time to Co-Plan Vendor PD Course Catalog
Provide high-quality instruction across all settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use high-quality curriculum and assessments to monitor progress of all students toward grade-level standards. • Use high-yield instructional strategies. • Incorporate individualized supports using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. 	UDL Strategies (Goal Book App) Diverse Learners Guide Whole-Group and Small-Group Supports For Diverse Learners Eureka Remediation Tools Annotated Reviews
Deliver specially-designed instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the IEP team, review multiple sources of data to determine progress and draft ambitious IEP goals. • Identify specially-designed instruction. • Build master schedule around student needs. • Plan for necessary staff and materials to support those needs. 	Tips for Inclusive Scheduling Sample Co-Plan/Co-Teach Schedule Connectors Resources

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SPECIALISTS

It is critical that students with disabilities, as much as possible, engage in the on-grade level learning with their peers and that any pullout support occurs outside of core instruction. Therefore, most students receive core academic instruction in a general education setting as they work toward mastery of the same grade-level academic [standards](#) as their peers. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, this may include the [Louisiana Connectors for Students with Significant Disabilities](#)—standards that are fully aligned to those of their peers. This requires [collaboration between general education and special education teachers to design standards-aligned lessons](#) that are both ambitious in their goals and responsive to individual needs of students. Together, teachers can determine the most [effective supports and accommodations](#) necessary. This kind of collaboration requires [effective professional development](#) to increase their understanding of standards and curriculum, as well as instructional strategies that support diverse populations of students and access to high-quality curricula and assessments.

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS

All students have unique learning needs and deserve access to high-quality instruction that is aligned to [rigorous standards](#), incorporates [high-quality curriculum and assessments](#), and includes supports that are individualized to meet specific student needs. Individualized supports are most effective when they are built into lessons and assessments on the front end with the particular needs of students in mind. In many cases, [tier 1 curricula](#) include recommendations and tools for individualizing instruction, but all teachers should understand the basic principles of accommodating diverse learning needs by incorporating [high yield instructional strategies](#).

HIGH YIELD INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

High Yield Instructional Strategies

✔ Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning	✔ Check for understanding and provide systematic feedback and corrections
✔ Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step	✔ Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks
✔ Ask many questions and incorporate multiple opportunities for student response	✔ Provide ongoing opportunities for review and practice
✔ Think aloud and provide models	✔ Teach skills and strategies that increase self-determination so that students can achieve their goals with greater independence
✔ Guide students as they begin to practice	

Teachers in all settings should also design lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL) is an evidence-based **framework** for individualizing instruction that provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone. Rather than a single, one-size-fits-all solution, UDL offers **flexible approaches** that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. When teachers use this framework to plan lessons, they can remove barriers that inhibit student success.

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION VS. SPECIALLY-DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

All students should have access to high-quality instruction that is responsive to their individual learning needs. Students with disabilities often need additional instruction that is specially-designed in content, methodology or delivery to address their unique learning needs. This should supplement, not replace, the individualized supports provided in the general education setting.

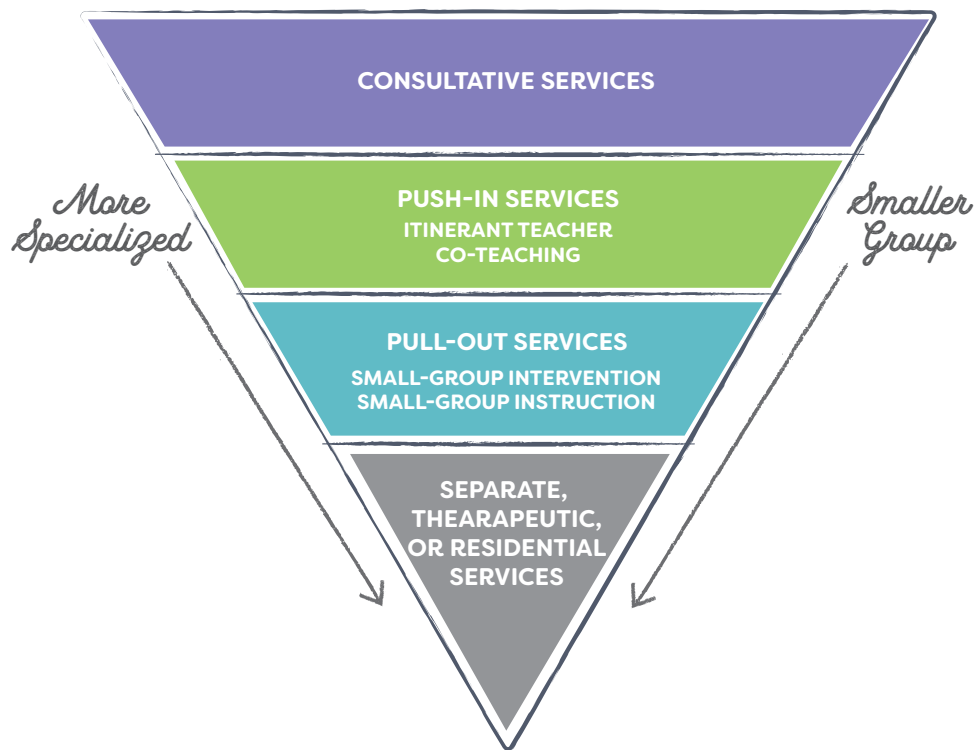
SPECIALLY-DESIGNED INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

For students with disabilities, greater degrees of **specially-designed instruction** may be required to accelerate learning and help them achieve their IEP goals. This might include implementing more specialized instructional strategies and **accommodations** or intensive instruction in a smaller setting. Most students can achieve their goals and master grade-level standards with less intensive, specially-designed instruction provided in the general education setting, such as consultative services or push-in services like co-teaching; however, these decisions should always be based on individual student need and linked directly to ambitious IEP goals as **determined by the IEP team**.

REMEDICATION VS. ACCELERATION OF LEARNING

The goal of specially-designed instruction for students with disabilities, should be the **acceleration of progress toward specific learning goals rather than remediation in certain deficit areas**. The acceleration of student progress is more effective than remediation of missed skills because it prepares students for new learning by increasing understanding and building connections to prior knowledge.

Specialized Instructional Services



STRATEGY 2 IMPLICATIONS FOR A STRONG IEP:

- Collaboration with general education teachers and ongoing professional development gives special education teachers the tools to write effective academic IEP goals that are aligned to the standards.
- In this context, general and special education teachers work together to identify and implement the most effective instructional accommodations for students with disabilities.

Spotlight: High-quality Instruction

COLLEGIATE ACADEMIES

“Collegiate Academies believes that the core curriculum must be strong and accessible for all students, including students who enter a school multiple years behind grade level in literacy skills... [We use a] Tier 1 curriculum that has diverse access points and has evidence of moving all students both in terms of absolute achievement of mastery but also in developmental growth in literacy and numeracy. Additionally, our data ecosystem and goals allow us to start with the end in mind and ensure that our curriculum is equitably achieving our goals for all students.”

STRATEGY THREE: STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTION WITH SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS AND RELATED SERVICES



Effective schools start with the premise that a student with a disability is a general education student

first. Administrators, regular education teachers, and service providers then work together so that high-quality instruction, specialized supports, and [related services](#) are fully integrated while also aligned to students' IEP goals.

Specialized supports and related services provide students with the tools they need to access high-quality instruction. Given the complexity of providing appropriate related services and support, however, students with disabilities are routinely pulled out of and miss core instruction and their school experiences become ineffective and disjointed as a result. School systems and leaders are encouraged to examine how placement decisions are made and the extent to which services outlined in the IEP are coordinated to protect a student's time in core instruction.

The third strategy for achieving ambitious goals for students with disabilities is to create and implement a coordinated and coherent vision for specialized supports and related services to meet the specific instructional needs of each student.

SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS AND RELATED SERVICES BEST PRACTICES	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
<p>Communicate a vision of excellence for coordinated supports and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vision and process for coordination at school system level. • Create a master schedule that protects core instruction and integrates services. 	<p>A Guide to Special Education for School-based Leaders</p> <p>Strategies for Creating Inclusive Schools</p> <p>(William & Mary Technical Assistance Center)</p>
<p>Identify and implement specially designed supports and related services based on the academic and functional needs of each student, not just their diagnosis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an IEP review and needs analysis. • Identify staffing needs based on the full continuum of services. • Provide guidance to service providers on determining least- to most-intensive supports and services. • Train general and special educators to implement need-driven supports and services. 	<p>IEP Handbook</p> <p>IEP Training Module: Measurable Goals</p> <p>10 Steps To Implementing Inclusive Practices</p> <p>Models of Support Worksheet</p>
<p>Systematically monitor progress and adjust intensity, location, and frequency of supports and services for students according to needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the compliance systems currently in place. • Determine what additional guidance is needed for an effective progress monitoring system. • Provide prescriptive checklists for IEP team meetings regarding integrated supports and services. 	<p>Formative Assessments and Monitoring Student Progress</p> <p>Using Progress Monitoring Data to Make Decisions (RTI4Success)</p>

COMMUNICATE A VISION OF EXCELLENCE FOR COORDINATED SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Effective schools provide the supports students need to achieve ambitious IEP goals, and do so within the [least restrictive environment](#). Doing so requires not only new practices among school personnel and service providers, but new thinking as well. A **person-centered strategy** is based on a student's specific needs rather than a global diagnosis or an abstract model of how services should be delivered. By building a vision of excellence predicated on addressing specific student needs, regular and special education teachers and specialists provide coordinated supports and related services that benefit students during core instruction.

IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT SPECIALLY DESIGNED SUPPORTS AND RELATED SERVICES

With the vision for prioritizing the academic and functional needs of each student in place, educators identify and implement specifically-designed supports and related services that define the level of intensity and location for service delivery. This section highlights three key strategies for executing this needs-driven approach.

1) *Coordinated, integrated, and seamless assists within the general education setting*

Students with disabilities participate as fully as possible in the same instructional program as all other children. In the integrated setting, a variety of strategies and a range of activities are utilized in tandem with the instruction all students receive. In this way, students with disabilities achieve at the same level, at the same rates, and at the same time as their peers. For inclusive supports and services to succeed, special education and regular education teachers work closely together to determine the student's exact needs, the interventions that work best, and the intensity required.

Best Practice Example One. In the past year, a student with [executive functioning](#) differences has attended a specialized study hall during the school day in order to receive 1:1 support in organization. The student's English teacher recently identified that the student continues to struggle with starting and completing classwork. The IEP team considers the following next steps.

WHAT SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS DOES THE STUDENT NEED?	After data collection, the team understands that the student has difficulties planning for, initiating, and persisting through classwork. Given the student's previous success with visual accommodations, the team decides to create visual schedules and activity checklists. Additionally, the team determines that assignments should be broken into manageable chunks for the student. Thus, the team believes that the student requires less intensive, in-class support to organize the work expected, stay on-task, and adhere to the schedule.
HOW WILL ADULTS IMPLEMENT THOSE SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS?	The special education teacher works with the IEP team to identify weekly and daily schedules that are important for the student to follow. Together, the English and special education teachers review lesson plans and define the critical tasks of each assignment. The special education teacher uses specialized software to create visual schedules and agendas for the student to use throughout his day. The classroom teacher provides the student with checklists that clearly divide the work into manageable chunks and name specific, time-bound breaks between working periods. The special education teacher creates a token economy to reinforce the student's use of supports and successful completion of assignments. The classroom teacher gradually fades the token economy as the student becomes more successful using the supports independently.
WHAT TRAINING AND/OR SUPPORT DO THE ADULTS NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN EFFECTIVELY?	The special education teacher and classroom teacher need protected time every week to review lesson plans and to create and adjust the supports as necessary. The special education and classroom teacher need training on the software used to create the schedules and checklists. The classroom teacher needs training in UDL to incorporate supports such as breaking assignments into manageable chunks without modifying the grade-level content. The special education teacher needs to train and support the classroom teacher in integrating sensory breaks as outlined in the student's IEP and in implementing the token economy system.

As the IEP team monitors progress, they may determine that the student requires even more intensive support in order to focus, attend, and stay organized. The occupational therapist, for example, may assess a need for additional supports related to fine and gross motor functioning, such as graph paper, a red-yellow-green desk notation system for time management, and a therapeutic ball chair seat. The more restrictive supports and accommodations are implemented based on specific data and progress toward IEP goals.

2) Supplementary, aligned activities across all settings that reinforce student learning and increase independence

When the IEP team uses multiple sources of data and works together, the needs of most students can be met with less intensive supports provided in the regular education setting, as illustrated in the example above. However, a small portion of students with disabilities may benefit from specially-designed instruction or related services that are best delivered 1:1 or in smaller group settings due to mitigating factors. When these activities build foundational skills, provide individualized scaffolding, ensure correct practice opportunities and are fully aligned to core academic instruction, students have a better chance of success in ways they otherwise would not.

The key here is not what services are delivered where, but that **placement decisions should always be made based on the needs of the student and there should be adequate data to support placing a student in more restrictive settings.**

Best Practice Example Two. A teacher has a student on the autism spectrum who is functioning well within the regular education classroom. As the IEP team continues to look for opportunities to improve classroom functioning, one teacher notes intensification of the student’s off-task and derailing behaviors whenever the class is operating in whole or small group settings. The teacher could consider the following next steps.

<p>WHAT SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS DOES THE STUDENT NEED?</p>	<p>The student is struggling with turn-taking and on-task behaviors in group settings. The IEP team identifies that the student needs to decrease blurting out and dominating class discussions. Data suggests that the student also needs more generalized pragmatic language skill development. The team decides to increase verbal and nonverbal cues to keep the student on track and teach turn-taking communication skills for more effective interactions. The occupational therapist (OT) also identifies replacement behaviors, such as the use of fidgets, to decrease impulsivity and increase attention in whole-group settings. They believe these supports and services will help the student effectively communicate in class discussions and, perhaps, prevent her from tuning out during group-work time when she finds it most difficult to participate appropriately.</p>
<p>HOW WILL ADULTS IMPLEMENT THOSE SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS?</p>	<p>The classroom teacher, speech therapist and OT observe the student in group settings, collect data on the disruptive behaviors, and determine a specific set of verbal and nonverbal cues to use when the student exhibits the problematic behaviors. The OT identifies an age-appropriate fidget that will decrease the impulsive behaviors without disrupting classroom instruction. The speech therapist provides 1:1 instruction focused on pragmatic language development, explicitly modeling and practicing turn-taking behaviors; she also practices and reinforces these behaviors with the student and her peers in a social skills group setting. The OT teaches the student when and how to use the fidget tool. The therapists train and support the classroom teacher so that he can model and reinforce the cues and strategies in the classroom. These cues are reinforced across all settings.</p>
<p>WHAT TRAINING AND/OR SUPPORT DO THE ADULTS NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN EFFECTIVELY?</p>	<p>The speech therapist and the scheduling administrator need to identify time in the student’s schedule for 1:1 and group services that will not pull her out of core instruction. The speech therapist and OT need to train the classroom teacher to model appropriate behaviors and to incorporate the verbal and non-verbal cues and replacement behaviors in the classroom. The classroom teacher, speech therapist and OT need protected time every other week to review data and analyze the effectiveness of the cues and supports.</p>

As a result of these combined efforts, the student is provided with the proper type, amount and intensity of coordinated support, and receives services outside of the regular classroom, only when they are the most beneficial intervention available. IEP team members should continue to observe the student in order to monitor progress and adjust services appropriately. As the student’s skills increase and progress toward IEP goals is evident, the IEP team should create a plan to reduce or eliminate pull-out services as appropriate.

3) Wider continuum of support promoting success across multiple life domains

In some cases, school-based supports and services work best when supplemented with comprehensive plans that “wrap around” the student’s home, school, and community life. These services support the student, whether in the realm of basic and safety needs, or broader social, emotional and educational needs. Wrap-around services are flexible. If interventions are not achieving desired outcomes, the team regroups to consider the configuration of supports, services, and interventions that are needed to ensure success in the home, school, and community settings.

Best Practice Example Three. A student is exhibiting some significant and pervasive behavioral challenges both in and outside of the classroom that have resulted in disciplinary actions including suspension. In the table below, the IEP team uses a data-driven process to implement a variety of supports and services intended to improve academic performance and social functioning more generally.

<p>WHAT SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS DOES THE STUDENT NEED?</p>	<p>The student is demonstrating disrespectful and disruptive behaviors in the classroom, and is spending a significant amount of non-academic time (hallways, recess, lunch) alone. The parent reports that these behaviors are also displayed at home. The IEP team, which includes the parent, social worker, classroom teachers, and special education coordinator, identifies that the student needs more intensive behavioral supports and support in generating greater connectedness with adults and peers both in-and-outside the school.</p> <p>To increase connection within the school, the team decides to implement a simple “Check-In, Check Out” system (CICO) each day with one adult in the school. They also plan to look for an assigned mentor from the community to further address the student’s socio-emotional connection. To attend to the student’s difficulties with disrespectful and disruptive behavior, the team decides to emphasize positive behaviors in the classroom by implementing a behavioral intervention plan.</p>
<p>HOW WILL ADULTS IMPLEMENT THOSE SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS?</p>	<p>The social worker creates the specific CICO plan and works with the team and school to determine how to implement without pulling the student out of core instruction. The student identifies an adult in the building with whom he will check in and out each day. The social worker communicates with the trusted adult and other team members throughout the day to provide updates on how the student is doing/what is needed. The social worker provides the parent with several contacts of potential mentorship programs, and together, they secure a mentor for the student. The social worker maintains regular contact with the mentor to anticipate issues and provide additional context for student behaviors. The classroom teachers use information from the CICO system about the student’s readiness to learn each day</p> <p>The special education teacher and classroom teacher conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) in order to write, implement, and monitor a behavior intervention plan (BIP). They identify two specific areas of need and identify specific positive behavioral strategies aligned to those areas. The special education teacher creates a communication protocol so that she, the classroom teacher and the social worker can communicate regularly, monitor progress and adjust accordingly.</p>
<p>WHAT TRAINING AND/OR SUPPORT DO THE ADULTS NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN EFFECTIVELY?</p>	<p>The social worker and the scheduling administrator identify time each day in the student’s schedule for CICO and to meet with the social worker without being pulled from core academic instruction. The parent needs support in identifying and connecting with appropriate mentorship programming in community, regular communication with other members of the team, and support from the social worker and special education teacher to reinforce supports at home. The mentor requires up-front information about the student, regular time and space to meet with the student, and ongoing, two-way communication with the IEP team when warranted.</p> <p>The classroom and special education teachers need training in coordinated early intervention supports (CEIS), specifically positive behavioral supports and the execution of a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). The classroom teacher needs training and appropriate resources to implement the strategies identified in the BIP. The social worker, classroom teacher and special education teacher need protected time every week to collaborate and review data to ensure that the supports are implemented effectively.</p>

When all of these steps are effectively implemented, the student benefits from a greater intensity of supports and services across multiple environments, increasing the likelihood her success.

SYSTEMATICALLY MONITOR PROGRESS

As with any instructional strategy undertaken, the key components of achieving ambitious goals for students with disabilities is in the consistent, systematic monitoring of their progress and making adjustments in intensity, location, and frequency of supports and services for students according to their needs. Whether in ensuring accurate and timely data, functional compliance systems, or consistent processes for making data-informed decisions, progress monitoring requires steadfast commitment to putting student needs first.

STRATEGY 3 IMPLICATIONS FOR A STRONG IEP:

- IEP Teams identify the most effective specialized supports and related services when they are aligned to specific student need identified in strong IEP goals.
- Those supports and services are implemented most effectively when multiple members of the IEP team coordinate around and are accountable for specialized approaches to shared goals.

Spotlight: Supports and Related Services

ST. BERNARD PARISH

“The St. Bernard Parish Public School System [links] both General Education and Special Education best practices as one holistic approach to educating all students in the least restrictive environment. We provide specialized professional development opportunities for all of the educational staff members to enhance their teaching skills to meet the needs of students with and without disabilities. These trainings include support staff such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech/language pathologists, para-educators, and pupil appraisal staff. Additionally, classroom teachers are given training in implementing assistive technology and assessment accommodations.”

STRATEGY FOUR: COORDINATE EFFECTIVE TRANSITION PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION



A strong special education system aims to equip students with skills needed to achieve success as they transition to postsecondary education, employment, and adult life. To achieve this, **planning** must begin before high school. Seamless transitions both within and beyond the pre-K through grade 12 system can radically improve students’ quality of life now and in the future.

Strategy 4 requires educators to coordinate supports at key transition points and prepare students for successful transition beyond the pre-K through 12 system.

	PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE:	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Within Pk-12 System	<p>Coordinate supports around Key Transition Points, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part C (birth to 3) to Part B (3-22) • Transition from Self-Contained to Departmentalized Structure • Transition to High School • Exit from Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a key service provider to coordinate the transition. • Clarify how and where services and supports will be implemented in the new context. • Familiarize the student and family with the structures, routines and expectations of the new setting/school. • Involve the student directly in the IEP planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Transition Birth to 5 Standards • Louisiana Student Standards Library • Grade 3-8 Assessments • High School Assessments • Graduation Pathways • Act 833
Beyond Pk-12	<p>Prepare students for postsecondary transition:</p> <p>Develop clear, ambitious and meaningful post-secondary goals</p> <p>Implement coordinated supports, services and activities aligned to goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the student. • Identify possible graduation pathways. • Assist the student in setting educational, gainful employment and independent living goals. • Provide instructional supports and services that are aligned to the course of study. • Identify and implement activities, such as hands-on work experiences. • Provide opportunities to learn and practice self-determination and self-advocacy skills. • Connect the student and family to external agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation Pathways • Act 833 • Transitional 9th Grade Policy • All Things Jump Start • Career Awareness and Counseling Options • Louisiana Star Jobs • ThinkCollege.net • Brigrance Life Skills Inventory (Transition Coalition) • Transitionta.org • Mentoring Youth With Disabilities (US Dept of Labor) • Making the Transition From School To Work (US Dept of Labor) • I’m Determined (VA Dept of Ed)

COORDINATE SUPPORTS AROUND KEY TRANSITION POINTS

As students with disabilities move through school, there are several key transition points that require careful coordination by administrators, teachers and service providers in order to ensure progress toward ambitious goals. At these times, students transition to new classrooms and new school contexts, which require careful planning well before the transition. Although this process should be initiated by the sending school and include the student and family, staff from both schools (including general and special education teachers and related services providers, school counselors, social workers and school administrators) should be included when appropriate. A key service provider, such as the special education case manager, should be tasked with communicating with the student, family, and IEP team members, assisting the student with the transition, and monitoring services, supports and schedules for effectiveness. The receiving school should create opportunities to familiarize the student and family with the structures, routines, and expectations of the new setting and school in advance of the transition. These same key actions should be considered when students transition between grade levels, teachers, and service providers, as these are also transition points when critical skills and opportunities can be lost.

EXIT FROM SOME OR ALL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AS A KEY TRANSITION POINT

Beginning with the first IEP, our ultimate goal is to teach students to utilize tools and internalize methods of learning so they no longer require special education supports and services. The impact of a student's disability may change over time requiring a change in supports: different supports, increased supports, fewer supports, and possibly no supports as they make progress toward grade-level standards and gain specific skills. Nonetheless, these decisions should always be made collaboratively by the IEP team and based on clear evidence and reevaluation data.

PREPARE STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION

Effective postsecondary transition plans prepare students with disabilities for success as they leave the pre-K through 12 system. [Transition planning](#) must be student-centered and fluid, and reflect the strengths and developmental needs of the students at different grades and times. [Coordinated planning](#) should link ambitious and meaningful postsecondary goals to effective and efficient [services and activities](#) that are implemented at the right time.

POSTSECONDARY GOAL SETTING

Postsecondary goals should be ambitious and personalized to include a student's strengths, abilities, and aspirations. Using a [person-centered approach](#) to planning, schools should assist the student in setting goals that are personally meaningful by administering career and vocational assessments, as well as [career interest inventories](#). They must also fit within the scope of the student's graduation pathway in order for them to be achievable. The school counselor should work collaboratively with the student, the family, and the IEP team to identify the [appropriate pathway](#) based on a variety of data, including the student's documented progress toward academic goals and present levels of academic and functional performance. These conversations should begin early and shape the [experiences and opportunities](#) that are available to students in school. Research has shown that students who set college-going goals early, who have greater exposure to college opportunities, and who are able to build college knowledge early, have a greater likelihood of attending a postsecondary institution.

COORDINATED SUPPORTS, SERVICES, AND ACTIVITIES

The IEP team has an obligation to identify what supports, services, and activities are needed for the student to reach his or her postsecondary goals and to implement them in a timely manner. This begins with a clearly defined [course of study](#) that is aligned to the student's postsecondary goals and incorporates the [skills and competencies](#) necessary to achieve those goals. The school must then implement the tools necessary to help the student succeed in this course of study. For example, students who plan to attend a four-year college should not be scheduled into low-level courses; they should be provided with appropriate assistive technology or instructional accommodations identified by the IEP team to support them in the required courses along their pathway.

For students implementing the provisions of [Act 833](#) (2014) to their graduation pathway, schools must [develop a course of study that supports their postsecondary employment goals](#). A [clear link](#) has been established between hands-on work experiences during high school and improved postsecondary outcomes. Schools should develop [work-based learning](#) opportunities aligned to the student's postsecondary employment goals and vocational interests, and when appropriate, [community-based instruction](#) opportunities to support the student's independent living goals. Research also confirms that students with disabilities who have

opportunities and experiences to develop [self-advocacy and self-determination skills](#) are more successful. This might include emphasizing decision-making and problem-solving skills, having students lead their IEP meetings and teaching students to identify and access resources that they will need to support them beyond high school.

Connecting to Postsecondary Supports

Connecting the student and family with some or all of the agencies listed below may be a necessary component to the transition planning process. Though not exhaustive, the activities listed below may need to be initiated in elementary and middle school due to extensive wait lists.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Determine whether guardianship and/or a special needs trust is appropriate; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Interview employment service providers that may assist with job placement after high school;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Open an individual development account (IDA) to save money for education, employment, specialized equipment or housing goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Apply for Developmental Disability (DD) services; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Apply for housing assistance programs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Secure case management services through OCDD or a brokerage; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Apply for the necessary waivers: Children’s Choice Waiver (CCW), New Opportunities Waiver (NOW), Residential Options Waiver (ROW), Supports Waiver (SW)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR); 	

Strategy 4 implications for a strong IEP

When transition goals are student-centered, ambitious, and aligned to the student’s present and anticipated needs in a new context, IEP teams can identify and implement effective services, supports, and activities.

Spotlight: Effective/Coordinated Transitions

EVANGELINE PARISH

“Evangeline Parish is setting rigorous academic goals for their students. This, coupled with career exploration provides opportunities working toward the alternate pathway diploma. In our parish, teachers use the *ELA Guidebook* and *Eureka Math* materials aligned with the *Louisiana Connectors* to adequately prepare students [with significant disabilities] for the real world. We also created a partnership with Louisiana Work Force Commission and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services through a Third Party Contract Agreement, which allows for paid employment opportunities for these students to gain work experiences which align to student career interests. Our students are leaving high school with rich educational and employment experiences that prepare them for success in either the work place or a postsecondary institution.”

