

Membership, Participation and Learning: Inclusive Educational Practices for Students with Complex Support Needs

The purpose of this focused training and technical assistance is to support Pennsylvania school districts in the design and implementation of sustainable inclusive educational practices for students with complex support needs. Guidance and support to school personnel are provided via a partnership among: the PA Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education (BSE), Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and Intermediate Unit (IU) personnel.

Although Pennsylvania's educational placement data show a steadily increasing trend of students with disabilities being educated for more time in general education classrooms with non-disabled peers, when these data are disaggregated by disability category, they indicated a need for additional focused work to support schools in impacting educational placements for students with complex support needs. For the purposes of our work in PA, students with complex support needs are those students with disabilities who comprise about 1 – 2 % of all students. These students most often participate in statewide assessment via the PASA; include students who have intellectual disabilities and/or multiple disabilities; require intensive instruction, modifications and supports to participate meaningfully and progress in the general education curriculum; and also may require augmentative communication systems and assistive technology in order to access, communicate, participate and progress in learning.

This training and technical assistance effort is designed to provide extensive training and on-going guided support over three years to identified schools resulting in effective implementation of inclusive educational practices for students with complex support needs. A three year plan is designed to provide district administrators, teachers and families with the training and support necessary to develop high quality, individualized inclusive educational practices for their students with complex support needs. Training and technical assistance is provided by teams consisting of: PaTTAN consultants; local IU Training and Consultative (TaC) staff, as well as BSE Advisers.

Expected Outcomes

- ❖ Students with complex support needs will receive meaningful educational benefit via effective education in general education classrooms with supplementary aids and services.
- ❖ Teachers, other professionals and paraeducators will collaborate to educate students with complex support needs in general education classrooms and settings.
- ❖ School administrators will demonstrate leadership skills instrumental in promoting an inclusive school community.
- ❖ Parents will be welcome partners with school districts in the support of inclusive education for their child.
- ❖ School District teams will implement plans for sustainability and expansion of practices.

Key Features

- ◆ Schools identified for participation via LRE Monitoring, Cyclical Monitoring, and voluntary participation.
- ◆ Twenty-five schools are participating over the last 3 years:
 - 14 Elementary. 7 Middle Schools and 4 High Schools
- ◆ Urban, Suburban and Rural schools participating
- ◆ Three of the elementary schools built on their participation in this to become part of the NIEI Model Demonstration Sites beginning this year.
- ◆ Plan for expansion in PA is to support at least 1 school district in each of the 29 Intermediate Units by 2011-12 with continued expansion within Intermediate Units for future years.

YEAR 1

Year 1 activities are designed to increase the team members' knowledge and skills so that they can identify inclusive opportunities as well as design a plan for inclusive education for their students with complex support needs.

Goals	Activities
Obtain commitment from Superintendent and other in leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Key stakeholders participate in discussions regarding rationale, commitment and their role with BSE and/or PaTTAN consultant.
Develop/expand leadership of principal(s) regarding inclusive practices for their students with complex support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Building administrators participate in all trainings and meetings. ◆ Building principals participate in professional development for developing an inclusive school. ◆ Building administrators receive on-going technical support.
Establish building level "Inclusive Practices" core teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Core team includes building administrators, special education leader, general and special education teachers, paraeducators, parent(s) and other personnel as identified by the district.
Establish opportunities for students to participate in meaningful ways in new activities with typical peers throughout the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Core team collects information about students' current placement and school day ◆ Teams identify opportunities for each student to participate in activities throughout the school
Collect and review data that describes current practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All building staff complete survey to assess current knowledge base and attitudes ◆ Analysis of neighborhood school educational placement data. ◆ Building team completes Inclusive Practices Evidence-Based Self-Assessment: Examining School and Classroom Practices.
Educate teachers, parents and other key stakeholders in strategies for inclusive education of students with complex support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PaTTAN and IU training team provides professional development (training and guided practice) in topics that support effective inclusive education, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Understanding ability awareness ◆ Use of people first language ◆ Facilitating change in attitudes towards children with disabilities – higher expectation for behavior and academic growth, presuming competence ◆ Facilitating Friendships – include guidance staff in training ◆ Teachers trained in Curricular Modification and the use of the SaS Consideration Toolkit
Develop an inclusive school community that welcomes diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Inclusive practices core team plans and provides building level trainings with support as needed by TA team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Support staff (custodial, secretarial, bus personnel, cafeteria, etc.) participates in training. ◆ Ability Awareness programs provided for all students. ◆ Parents included and participate in trainings ◆ PDE welcome poster prominently displayed.
Develop a plan for implementing inclusive education for students with complex support needs in this school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Building team develops an action plan, with support from TA team, to address priorities identified in self-assessment

Year 2

Year 2 focuses on implementing the action plan and expanding inclusive opportunities as students with complex support needs participate in age appropriate content area instruction. Training and TA focuses on facilitating student team planning and problem solving as well as supporting the on-going work of the building core team.

Goals	Suggested Activities
Expand opportunities for students to participate in meaningful ways in new activities with typical peers throughout the school, including participation in academic and non-academic activities with supplementary aids and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ On-site TA is provided to support meaningful participation and learning (e.g. identification of assistive technology to support communication, modifying curricular goals, for curricular adaptations.
Structures, resources and supports for teachers are established. For example, teacher collaboration time scheduled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review current supports and adjust as needed. ◆ Provide training provided for staff who are new to building ◆ On-site TA provided for team in implementation of Action Plan based on inclusive practices self-assessment. ◆ Individual Student Support Teams developed and regular meeting times established.
Increase student participation in various academic instructional settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Teachers utilize ongoing analysis of educational interventions.
Evaluate and assess on-going staff and student needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Building based teams review current successes, teacher feedback, and student progress.
Expand community and parent partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Strong family and community communication system established to ensure parent partnership
Increase student independence throughout the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Onsite TA and training of staff to support for increased student independence throughout the building.
Plan for sustainability of practices	<p>Administrative Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review and revise district Induction Plan, as needed, to ensure teachers knowledge base and skill level for teaching students with cognitive disabilities is developed. ◆ Review and revise school board policy to ensure ongoing training and technical support for inclusive practices is available and/or mandated for all staff ◆ Building level Inclusive Practices core team provide input. ◆ Interview process for potential hires contains guiding questions to analyze depth of knowledge, practice and philosophy in regard to inclusive practices
Collect data to assess changes in practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Complete teachers survey eliciting perceptions and suggestions. ◆ Student placement data in general education setting updated. ◆ Core team meets to review, analyze and plan for Year 3.

Year 3

Inclusive opportunities are reviewed and refined to ensure student goals are met and teacher supports are appropriate. Students with complex support needs are active participants in the school community.

Primary Goals	Suggested Activities
<p>Every student with complex support needs is educated in general education classes and settings with supplementary aids and services for the majority of the school day</p> <p>All teachers are expected to teach and interact with students who have complex support needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ IEP meetings held – Team decision to increase inclusive educational options for students obtained. ◆ Establish a system to continuously review practices and determine ongoing staff development needs established. ◆ Building leadership team clearly defines vision of a sustainable, inclusive school.
<p>Families an integral part of school program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Families complete a parent survey to provide input. ◆ Explore opportunities for parents to meaningfully collaborate with educators.
<p>Transfer of external support to internal personnel to ensure capacity building for subsequent years as an indicator of change with educational practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Administrators identify several key internal personnel (team) to follow through with ongoing training and technical assistance within district.
<p>Development of self-advocacy skills for students with complex support needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Teachers provide instruction and guided practice for students in the areas of self-determination and self-advocacy
<p>Data collected to assess changing practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Complete teachers survey eliciting perceptions and suggestions. ◆ Student placement data in general education setting updated.

For more information:

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