

WEST MIFFLIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
INCLUSIVE PRACTICES GUIDE
Office of Pupil Services

In accordance with IDEA, the West Mifflin Area School District is committed to serving our students with special needs in the least restrictive environment. IDEA states two things in regard to LRE: 1.) special education students should be with their same-aged peers in the general education class to the “maximum extent that is appropriate” and 2.) special classes, separate schools, or removal from the general education class should only happen when the child’s learning or thinking difference is so severe that supplementary aids and services can’t provide the child with an appropriate education.

To help meet the needs of our students with special needs in the least restrictive environment, West Mifflin SD implements the ***inclusion model*** of instruction. Inclusion begins with the belief that all children have equal access to education. Children become accepting and understanding of one another’s abilities, personalities and needs. Meaningful friendships develop as students spend quality time with one another and develop confidence in themselves.

There are various action steps in developing a successful inclusion model; one in which offers educational benefit and fidelity to all students.

STEP 1: Data Collection

In moving forward, the following data will need to be collected at each grade level by the Principal, Guidance Counselor, Case Manager:

- How many students with disabilities are currently enrolled in general education classes?
- How are students with disabilities scheduled into general education classes?
- How many special education teachers are providing inclusion support in the school?
- What interventions are being utilized through MTSS?
- What resources are available to help meet the needs of the students with disabilities (mentors, tutoring, E-SAP, SAP, Para-professional support?)
- What resources are available for teachers to help support the needs of students with disabilities? (Professional Development, joint-planning time)
- Are the teachers WILLING to implement an inclusive model in their classroom to support ALL students?

Step 2: Implementation

Identifying Student Support Needs and Scheduling:

- 1.) Determine the type and level of support the student needs in order to be successful in the general education setting.
 - The District will implement the “Student Needs First” process to ensure that support needs are what dictates what general education classes a student is scheduled in and how s/he will be supported in those classes.
 - “STUDENT NEEDS FIRST” process includes information from a variety of sources, such as: evaluations, IEP, grades, test scores, reports from teachers, behavior reports, input from family
 - In addition, comparing what is expected of a student to what a student is currently achieving or not achieving identifies the gaps in learning. These gaps are the areas in which a student with a disability needs to be supported while in the general education setting.
- 2.) Once the support needs are identified, it is then possible to identify the level of support and the type of staff who will provide the support.



Level
1

Students needing **Level 1** support are those students who function fairly close to grade level and who meet class expectations for behavior. These students should be successful in general education settings without the benefit of an inclusion teacher or para-professional as long as the general education teacher is using differentiated instructional strategies and providing accommodations.



Level
2

Students needing Level 2 support are those students who will need accommodations in the general education classroom. These students would benefit from an inclusion teacher assigned to their general education class or a para-professional for support.



Level
3

Students needing Level 3 support are those students who will need maximum, intense support and accommodations to be successful in general education classes. These students need significant accommodations and probably some modifications for the majority of subjects. These students will definitely need an inclusion teacher assigned to their general education classes and may need some “pull-out” special education instruction for specific subjects.

Matching the appropriate level of support to the student is critical. This is a determining factor when developing the master schedule, indicating which classes will be the inclusion classes and the number of staff needed for the following year.

The case managers may need to revise the IEP to reflect general education with/without supports. A new NOREP will then be issued to reflect the change in educational placement.

Step 3: Professional Development

Professional development in the area of inclusion is critical to support the regular education teacher as well as the special education teacher. Professional development helps both teachers create a collaborative approach to meeting the student's needs. The definition of collaborative professional development is 'shared, sustained learning involving two or more teachers' (Zeng and Day).

Enhancing the quality of instruction through teachers' professional development is seen as a crucial factor for developing inclusive education

The District will work in conjunction with PaTTAN, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) and outside providers to offer professional development to ensure positive outcomes for both students and teachers.

Below are a variety of professional development opportunities to help educate and train the teachers in the district:

- Optimized Inclusive Practices (OIP) Professional Development Series through PaTTAN
 - A 9 series of professional development designed to support district and school leaders, classroom educators, related service providers and others in the implementation of optimized inclusive practices.
- Include Me – An initiative of The Arc of Pennsylvania
 - The mission of the Include Me Program is to provide on-site, intensive training

- <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/10-easy-changes-teachers-can-make-facilitate-inclusion>
 - Ten practical ways to make changes in your classroom so that students with different abilities can learn and succeed.

- <https://inclusiveschools.org/category/resources/professional-development/>
 - Articles from the Inclusive Schools Network focusing on formalizing external supports, self-assessment and action planning, shared ownership, and celebrating collaborative teaching success

Strategies to Make Inclusion Work

- Peer Tutoring – Result in improved academic outcomes for **all** students.
- Graphic/advanced organizers
- Mnemonics
- Supplementing grade level textbook with other materials
- Inquiry approach to science
- Small group work- Have the student and a few selected classmates work in a small group that the teacher can sit with and support
- Give the student the choice of how he/she learns best. For example, standing, sitting at a table as opposed to a desk, allow student to work in a quiet space or study carrel, use of headphones
- Incorporate more visuals. Such as maps, pictures, drawings, or videos
- Technology
- Check for understanding more frequently
- Provide students with differentiated reading material based on their reading level/interest
- Highlighted text, enlarged text, pictures or symbols
- Modify essay assignments- Student completes a chart or create an outline
- Reduce the number of items students are expected to complete
- Guided notes or a slot-note format
- Allow for more creative ways for students to show what they know. For instance, building a model, create a poster, or draw a map