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ADMINISTRATORS
CONFERENCE

Supporting Special Education Outcomes

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The engageok logo, featuring the text "engageok" in white and orange, with a purple and yellow graphic element below it, set against a purple background.

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Foundational Leadership Principles

Effective school administrators are those who articulate a vision that **all students** are capable of learning and that the school community as a whole is responsible for meeting their educational needs.

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep02/>



Foundational Leadership Principles - 2

- Promoting a shared vision for the academic success of all students
- Providing systems of academic and social supports and services
- Providing opportunities for professional development
- Providing opportunities for collaboration
- Creating positive and collaborative relationships with families
- Using data to monitor student progress

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep02/>



Foundational Leadership Principles - 3

- To become more effective and efficient, districts should:
 - Stop using special education as the catchall program for students who fall behind academically or are disruptive;
 - Place students in more inclusive settings;
 - Reduce unwanted turnover among teachers of students with disabilities; and
 - Focus more on instructional quality and less on its quantity.

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep02/>

Outline

- Category, Proficiency and LRE Data
- Ensure High-Quality IEPs are Developed and Implemented
- Provide Effective Professional Development
- Increase Quality Collaboration
- Implement School-wide Academic and Behavioral Frameworks
- Engage Families
- Support Special Education Teachers, Paraprofessionals, and Related Services Staff
- Utilize High Leverage Practices in Special Education

Disability Categories

Disability Category	Percentage of SWDs
Autism	8.47%
Deaf-Blindness	0.02%
Emotional Disturbance	3.78%
Hearing Impairment, including Deafness	1.31%
Intellectual Disabilities	6.69%
Multiple Disabilities	1.78%
Orthopedic Impairments	0.43%
Other Health Impairments	19.22%
Specific Learning Disability	36.45%
Speech or Language Impairment	21.01%
Traumatic Brain Injury	0.23%

Assessment Proficiency

Year	Student	Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Science Proficiency
2017	SPED	15.93%	14.55%	17.08%
2017	GenEd	39.93%	42.65%	47.05%
2018	SPED	13.43%	12.60%	15.49%
2018	GenEd	35.72%	38.78%	45.05%

Disability Category – LRE

LRE	Autism	Deaf-Blindness	Developmental Delays	Emotional Disturbance
LRE- <40%	23.27%	42.11%	6.82%	12.05%
LRE- 40 to 79%	23.92%	31.58%	14.64%	23.66%
LRE- 80+	52.81%	26.32%	78.54%	64.28%

Disability Category – LRE - 2

LRE	Hearing Impairment, including Deafness	Intellectual Disabilities	Multiple Disabilities
LRE- <40%	10.58%	31.68%	51.04%
LRE- 40 to 79%	15.84%	41.22%	24.45%
LRE- 80+	73.58%	27.10%	24.51%

Disability Category – LRE - 3

LRE	Orthopedic Impairments	Other Health Impairments	Specific Learning Disability
LRE- <40%	5.26%	4.54%	3.17%
LRE- 40 to 79%	12.69%	20.91%	22.65%
LRE- 80+	82.04%	74.55%	74.18%

Disability Category – LRE - 4

LRE	Speech or Language Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury	Visual Impairment, including Blindness
LRE- <40%	0.72%	16.59%	9.56%
LRE- 40 to 79%	0.68%	30.13%	17.11%
LRE- 80+	98.60%	53.28%	73.32%

High Quality IEPs

- School administrators play a critical role in ensuring that high-quality IEPs are developed and implemented for each student eligible for Special Education Services.
- This requires a solid understanding of the *IEP process*. Schools that follow this process meet the procedural requirements of IDEA; those that do not, risk poor outcomes for students with disabilities and open themselves and their districts up to potential legal ramifications.

High Quality IEPs - 2

- As the school's instructional leader, the administrator is responsible for establishing school-specific procedures and practices related to the IEP process.
 - Who is responsible for facilitating the IEP process
 - How the IEP is disseminated to relevant educators and other school personnel
 - Who will be responsible for evaluating progress on the goals

High Quality IEPs - 3

- School administrators should be actively engaged in overseeing the IEP process. To effectively do so, they should:
 - Have a full and complete understanding of the IEP process
 - Ensure that school personnel follow appropriate procedures
 - Make sure student progress is being monitored

High Quality IEPs - 4

- To help determine who should attend the IEP meeting and to anticipate staffing requirements or resources to meet the student's needs, administrators might want to meet with relevant professionals to discuss:
 - Successful and unsuccessful techniques and interventions
 - Academic or behavioral recommendations for the student's educational program
 - Needed clarification pertaining to reports
 - Anticipated need for additional expenditures (e.g., assistive technology)
 - Anticipated need for staffing and space (e.g., an additional speech-language pathologist)

High Quality IEPs - 5

- To facilitate a productive meeting, the school administrator should:
 - Consider the scheduling needs of the child's parents
 - Establish that there will be adequate class coverage for any teacher who will be attending the IEP meeting (e.g., hire substitutes, arrange for combined classes)
 - Secure a distraction-free meeting space
 - Ensure that a sign-language interpreter or translator who speaks the parent's native language will be available, if needed
 - Consider the team's physical needs (e.g., sufficient seating, coffee, water)
 - Make sure parents know where to go (e.g., reserve parking space, send instructions on how to find the main office)

High Quality IEPs - 6

- At the IEP meeting:
 - Create a welcoming environment
 - Encourage parents to share
 - Monitor meeting productivity
 - Create structure for the meeting
 - Establish shared understandings
 - Guide the IEP development
 - Ensure that the continuum of alternative placements is considered

High Quality IEPs - 7

- School administrators should make sure that:
 - Parents are meaningfully involved in the IEP's implementation
 - School personnel understand their responsibilities and have the skills and training necessary to deliver the supports and services as outlined in the IEP
- School administrators should make sure all individuals involved in implementation:
 - Have access to the IEP
 - Know their responsibilities for IEP implementation
 - Are informed of the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided

High Quality IEPs - 8

- Implementing IEPs - Are school personnel implementing the services and supports described in the IEP?
 - Answer any questions or concerns personnel might have about the planned services and supports.
 - Identify the process by which they will monitor and document whether the planned services are being delivered (e.g., teacher logs).
 - Ensure that data is being collected to monitor the student's progress toward meeting her IEP goals.

High Quality IEPs - 9

- Are school personnel implementing each service and support in the IEP with the correct frequency and duration? In the correct setting?
- Verify:
 - Services the student should receive
 - Frequency and duration of those services
 - Person responsible for providing each service
 - Location of the services
 - Start and end dates of each service

High Quality IEPs - 10

- How often will fidelity data be reviewed and analyzed?
 - It is helpful to review fidelity data within six weeks to verify whether services and supports documented in the IEP are being implemented with fidelity. In instances of low fidelity, school personnel should identify problem areas and develop procedures to address them. Periodic, unannounced spot checks throughout the school year are effective for maintaining high fidelity levels.

High Quality IEPs - 11

- How will low fidelity of implementation be addressed?
 - School administrators need to have a decision-making system in place to determine required actions for when services and supports are not being implemented with fidelity.
 - These actions should address the reason the service provider is not implementing with fidelity, such as a lack of understanding, resources, or training.
 - The school administrator's response to low fidelity should be supportive and provide educators with the assistance they need to implement the IEP as intended.

High Quality IEPs - 12

- An IEP meeting should be scheduled when a student is not making progress and the type or extent of the required changes warrant a meeting. Additionally, for reasons such as:
- The student is frequently absent (e.g., because of illness) and has fallen behind in her work.
- Data indicate that the student needs more help with assignments or instruction.
- A new evaluation (from the district or parent) has been completed and there is information that could guide the IEP.
- The parent feels their child is not making enough progress.
- The student exhibits behavioral issues that need to be addressed.

Professional Development

- Effective leaders ensure that school personnel have the knowledge and skills they need to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities associated with the IEP process and the implementation of the services and supports documented in the IEP. One way to accomplish this is to provide effective professional development (PD).

Professional Development - 2

- Seven features of effective PD:
 - Is content focused
 - Incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory
 - Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts
 - Uses models and modeling of effective practice
 - Provides coaching and expert support
 - Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection
 - Is of sustained duration
- *(Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, & Espinoza, 2017)*

Professional Development - 3

- Providing instruction for students with disabilities necessitates special knowledge and expertise.
- A large percentage of general education teachers, in particular those new to the profession, do not feel adequately prepared to teach these students.

Collaboration

- Multiple educators are responsible for providing services and supports to students with disabilities.
- School administrators can encourage collaboration by allocating time for these educators to collaborate on a regular basis.
- When school leaders (in this case, principals) supported teachers' collaborative efforts, these efforts were associated with increased student achievement. (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015)

Collaboration - 2

- Whether in pairs, small groups, or large groups, educators might collaborate in regard to:
 - Adapting the general education curriculum to meet the student's needs
 - Aligning general education and special education instruction
 - Identifying instructional practices and strategies that might benefit the student
 - Developing appropriate assessments

School-Wide Supports

- School administrators should create a vision in which **all students** are accepted and valued for their unique abilities and included as integral members of the school. When this vision is embraced, the entire school community assumes a shared responsibility for their success. To support this shared responsibility and the success of all students, school administrators can:
 - Establish frameworks of academic and social supports and services
 - Promote strong school-parent relationships

School-Wide Supports

- School administrators should implement frameworks to address the academic and behavioral needs of all students, including struggling learners and those with disabilities.
- Most students will succeed with minimal supports, while others will require more intensive ones.
- Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) - This approach provides interventions of increasing levels of intensity matched to students' needs and based on data. MTSS emphasizes the selection and use of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices.
- Response to Intervention / Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (RtI/PBIS)
- Oklahoma Tiered Intervention System of Supports (OTISS)
<http://www.otiss.net/>

Engage Families

- Family involvement is one of the most important—if not *the* most important—factors in helping to ensure a child’s success in school.
- Family involvement increases academic achievement, as reflected in higher test scores and graduation rates, and further improves the likelihood that students will go on to pursue higher education.

Engage Families - 2

- Educators can employ the following strategies to encourage involvement of families in their child's education.
- Effective Communication
- Learning – involve families in their child's learning at home
- School Decision Making – include families in school-related decision making

Engage Families - 3

- Show respect by recognizing parents as decision makers and by respecting their points of view. Respecting parents means acknowledging them as the ultimate decision-makers on behalf of their child.
- Generally, parents are the one constant influence and presence in their child's life. Parents are actively involved in their lives well into adulthood, whereas educators influence their lives for only one or two school years.
- School personnel need to remember the rules of basic courtesy when communicating with all parents, taking into consideration different cultural, linguistic, educational, economic, and racial backgrounds.

Engage Families - 4

- Use a **strengths-based approach**, which acknowledges and builds on what a student does well.
- When talking about a student who doesn't have a disability or an identified need, educators often focus on the student's abilities, talents, and progress.
- It is important for educators not only to recognize that both the child and his or her family have abilities and talents but also to make it a practice to communicate that recognition to the families.

Supporting Staff - 1

- Support “real” inclusion
- Attend IEP meetings and make it clear that other staff should as well
- Include SpEd staff in any discussions that impact students
- Make support staff feel included
- Be present in classrooms more often
- Have a basic understanding of special education
- Give more time for collaboration and other required tasks for all teachers

Supporting Staff - 2

- View special education as important
- Provide time for planning
- Respect special education teachers
- Provide PD to general education teachers on supporting special education students in their classrooms

Supporting Staff - 3

- Key Competencies of Effective Special Education Teachers:
- Maximizing literacy learning;
- Implementing positive behavior supports;
- Teaching students who have significant disabilities;
- Using technology to support curricular access, participation, and learning; and
- Helping teams implement effective practices for diverse learners in general education classrooms.

Supporting Staff - 4

- Promote a positive school culture
- Be an instructional leader
- Supporting induction and mentor programs

Supporting Staff - 5

- Special Education Teacher Induction
 - Engage them in orientation sessions that are designed to help them understand the school's policies and procedures.
 - Observe them and offer nonthreatening feedback of their teaching.
 - Protect them from difficult situations (e.g., large numbers of challenging students, extensive nonteaching duties, etc.).
 - Provide mentors who are capable of meeting new teachers' needs.
 - Provide time to plan with colleagues, observe other classrooms, and meet with other new teachers for peer support.
 - Provide resources (e.g., curriculum materials, professional development, suitable classroom space, etc.).

Supporting Staff - 6

- Districts can support principals by:
 - Understanding that induction is only one of the many responsibilities that compete for principals' time.
 - Distributing responsibility for induction and mentoring training across the district and school staff.
 - Providing them with professional development in special education.
 - Supporting the development of collaborative school cultures (e.g., schedule release time, offer incentives).
 - Making available district personnel who have expertise in special education.

High Leverage Practices

- Main idea: Ensure that all leaders are knowledgeable of evidence-based and high-leverage practices teachers need to advance positive outcomes for students with disabilities.
- HLPs must:
 - Be fundamental to effective teaching
 - Be used frequently by teachers
 - Cut across instructional content
 - Apply to many age levels
 - Apply to different types of learners
 - Improve student outcomes

Slides 41-44 adapted from McLeskey et al (2017)

High Leverage Practices - 2

- 22 HLPs across four domains:
- Collaboration (3)
- Assessment (4)
- Social Emotional/Behavioral (4)
- Instruction (12)

High Leverage Practices - 3

- Many competing agendas leave teachers confused and overwhelmed
- Every student deserves access to excellent teachers
- A seamless system of instructional expectations from preservice to in-service will advance educator quality
- High-quality core instruction is essential
- Students who struggle and/or students with disabilities can get the level of support/instruction needed
- Skilled teaching can be decomposed and taught

High Leverage Practices - 4

- District leaders can prioritize widespread implementation
- School leaders can support building- and classroom-level implementation
- Teachers can use HLPs to implement EBPs to meet the various needs of learners in their classrooms
 - Evidence-based practices are commonly understood as those practices informed by research that lead to improved educational outcomes.

Resources

- The IRIS Center (2019). IEPs: How Administrators Can Support the Development and Implementation of High-Quality IEPs. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep02/>
- [McLeskey, J., Barringer, M-D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., Jackson, D., Kennedy, M., Lewis, T., Maheady, L., Rodriguez, J., Scheeler, M. C., Winn, J., & Ziegler, D. \(2017, January\). High-leverage practices in special education. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center.](#)
- [Great Instruction, Great Achievement for Students with Disabilities: A Roadmap for Special Education Administrators. John L. O'Connor \(2016\)](#)
- [Students with Disabilities Can Meet Accountability Standards: A Roadmap for School Leaders. John O'Connor \(2009\)](#)
- Mentoring and Induction Toolkit - <https://gtlcenter.org/technical-assistance/toolkits/mi-toolkit>
- IRIS Evidence Based Practices - https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/ebp_summaries/
- What Works Clearinghouse - <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Index>