

How to Support Students With Disabilities (SWD)

Classroom Practice and Student Supports



Understanding your students

- Start with relationships and understanding your students, their hopes for themselves, and the supports they need.
- Read their IEP and learn their goals for the year, as well as the services and accommodations they have. Make note of any unfamiliar terms and follow up with your school psychologist.
- Meet with your students and ask them about any specific goals they have for themselves this year.
- Support SWD with their organization skills as they transition back into the classroom.
- Ask SWD what tools they like to use at home, they likely have an idea of the kinds of resources and technology that help them.
- Incorporate a “cool-down” or “chill” station in your classroom specifically designated to support SWD and other students who may be overstimulated and need to step away from the class.
- Add sensory toys or objects (fidget spinners, cushions, textured items, headphones), writing materials, reading

materials, coloring books, or whatever is age-appropriate.

- If a “station” is not appropriate for your classroom, create a signal or notification system for students who might need support or need to step away.
- Co-construct rules and guidelines for your classroom with your students.
- Offer a job or leadership position in the classroom that may give sense of purpose and contribution to the classroom.
- Provide in-classroom opportunities for peer collaboration and feedback to promote SWD social skills, self-esteem, and sense of belonging.



Family Collaboration

Families have valuable and rich knowledge about their child and their child’s disability that can help ease their transition into the in-person classroom environment. Meet with families beforehand to discuss what they noticed and/or learned about their child’s learning needs during the pandemic.

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Points of Reflection

Students of Color are more likely to be labeled with a disability than other students. Be mindful of your school's practices and policies that may contribute to disproportionality within your school, particularly around the realms of disability classification and discipline.



Glossary

SWD - Students with Disabilities.

Resource Specialist Program (RSP) - Students who participate in the general education setting with either “push-in” or “pull-out” support or both.

Special Day Class (SDC) - Students who participate for the majority in specialized classrooms for students with disabilities.



Common Missteps or Misconceptions

“Students with similar/like disability labels learn similarly”

- Disability is not a monolith. Just like all students, students with disabilities have their own unique needs, styles, and assets that they bring to the classroom.

“Students with disabilities are difficult to teach. They should be in special classrooms.”

- We must design learning environments that accommodate the needs and abilities of all students, and not just the majority.
- Students with varying types of disabilities can learn in general education settings with support, and often do well in those kinds of settings with teacher, peer, administrative, and family support.



Resources for Continued Learning

[Universal Design for Learning](#)