

# DISABILITY-AFFIRMING EDUCATION

## Indicators for Classrooms, Schools, and School Districts

**Purpose:** These indicators are intended to guide school and district leaders' efforts to create disability affirming spaces and educational experiences to positively impact all learners, especially those with disabilities.\*

**Directions for Team Reflection:** Convene your school or district leadership team or a team of interested and influential personnel and stakeholders. Review the indicators. Score practices as in place, partially in place, or not yet in place. Select a practice to improve that will bring the greatest benefit to disabled learners and is achievable by the team in a short period of time. Describe supports or strategies needed to secure the practice. List action steps, timeline, and people responsible. Monitor completion of action steps and repeat the process as needed.

	In place	Partially in place	Not yet in place
<b>Culture:</b>			
1. All staff understand the difference between <b>equality and equity</b> and incorporate this difference in classroom routines and expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. All staff actively consider the impact of their language, understand the difference between <b>person-first and identity-first descriptions</b> , and respect student language preferences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Educators <b>routinely examine and adjust</b> materials to ensure they are free of bias, oppression, ableism, and underrepresentation of disabled people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. <b>Disabled adults are present</b> in the school community as leaders, educators, staff, volunteers, guest presenters, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. <b>Disabled students are engaged in learning in general education</b> a minimum of 80% of the school day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Curriculum and Lesson Design:

1. Students experience <b>learning that matters and is relevant</b> to their lives, culture, communities, and the world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. To address learner variability, educators use <b>an agreed-upon framework</b> , like Universal Design for Learning or Differentiated Instruction, to design, deliver, evaluate, and enhance curriculum** and learning environments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. <b>Accurate, positive, and neutral representations of disability</b> are visibly present in the curriculum materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Classroom <b>conversations involving disability</b> are part of the norm.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*(continued)*



	In place	Partially in place	Not yet in place
5. All students are expected to develop their understanding of <b>individual and group identity (like cultural history)</b> as well as their understanding of <b>power, equity, and anti-oppression</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. To ensure the lens of disability-affirming practices, <b>disabled adults are involved</b> in mentoring and coaching curriculum planning activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. <b>Oppressive and ableist narratives of disability have been eliminated</b> from the curriculum and true historical facts are represented (institutionalization, segregation, low expectations).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Assessments for screening, accountability, and growth outcomes are <b>equitable and accessible</b> for all learners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. <b>College- and career-readiness</b> standards and expectations are applied to all disabled students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Supports:**

1. When challenged by the behaviors of disabled learners, the team collaborates to conduct comprehensive assessments to understand the <b>underlying reasons for behaviors</b> and develop disability-affirming, learner-centered, proactive, and <b>positive support plans</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. When disabled learners cannot rely on speech to be heard or understood, the team conducts comprehensive assessments to identify and provide <b>augmentative and alternative communication</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Physical Space:**

1. All spaces used for learning and play are <b>accessible and welcoming</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The educational space is <b>sensory- and motor-friendly</b> with consideration for lighting, visuals, sound, and opportunities for movement and regulation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. <b>Accurate, positive, and neutral representations of disability</b> are visibly present in the physical space of the school/classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. There are <b>no spaces designated for “special education”</b> and/or “programs” for disabled students that routinely separate them from their peers and the general education curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. All school-sponsored <b>extracurricular activities</b> are designed, scheduled, promoted, and supported to welcome disabled students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*To respect the preferences and perspectives of our community, Evolve & Effect uses both identity and person first language. For more information on language: NH Disability RAPP Winter/Spring 2023: Words Matter. <https://drcnh.org/rap-sheet/spring-2023-words-matter/>.

\*\*Curriculum includes standards, goals, methods, materials, and assessments (both formative and summative).



**Team Reflection:**

Select a practice to improve that will bring the greatest benefit to disabled learners and is achievable by the team in a short period of time. Describe supports or strategies needed to secure the practice. List action steps, timeline, and people responsible. Monitor completion of action steps and repeat the process as needed.

**Selected Practice**

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**Supports/Strategies Needed to Secure Practice**

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**Action Steps**

What	By When	By Whom

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