



PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Student's Name: STUDENT A
Date of Birth: xx/xx/xxxx
Age: 10
Grade: 4th

Date of Observation:
Date of Report:
Observer Name: Michael McSheehan
School: Watertown Elementary School

Reason for Participation Assessment:

STUDENT's team requested an assessment of his participation in general education settings as part of his three-year evaluation. A goal on his current IEP is to increase his participation in both social and academic activities within general education environments with peers who are not a part of the [separate special ed] program. The team wants to (a) have a current measure describing his participation and (b) explore options for increasing his participation in the future.

Participation Assessment—Rationale and Elements:

In basic terms, *participating* with a community of learners, with educators, and with the curriculum¹ is how students gain knowledge and skills. A student's participation is affected by many factors, including (a) their sense of membership and belonging in the community, (b) their relationship and interactions with educators and classmates, (c) the design and delivery of general education curriculum², and (d) the supports that bridge across their individual-learner characteristics and the first three factors.

To describe STUDENT's participation and explore ways to enhance or expand it, two methods were used to capture the four factors described above:

- a Likert-scale survey of indicators about participation completed by educators, and
- analysis of data collected through observation of STUDENT's participation in general education settings.

Background:

STUDENT is a 10-year-old boy who attends Watertown Elementary School and has been attending this school since first grade. STUDENT's participation in school has been restricted over the years in the form of shortened days and limited time in general education settings with nondisabled peers due to safety concerns, with corresponding increases in his time in specialized settings, with special educators and related-service providers, following a special education curriculum, and with 2:1 adult support. Over the last year, STUDENT's time in general education settings, with general educators, alongside nondisabled peers, and with exposure to general curriculum has substantially increased with a decrease in 1:1 adult support. As of [date of this observation], some days, STUDENT is scheduled for 120 minutes in general education classrooms (breakfast & morning meeting, snack, specials, quiet time/read aloud, and science), and time with peers during lunch and recess in the typical locations.

¹ Curriculum is defined as a collection of learning standards, goals, methods, materials, and assessments.

² General education curriculum is defined in IDEA-Part B regulations as "the same curriculum as for nondisabled children."

Educator Ratings of Indicators of Participation in General Education:

A set of eight indicators, judged to be most relevant and sensitive to the design of STUDENT’s education, were selected from The Beyond Access Model (McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, Jorgensen, 2009; Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010). Likert ratings on participation and communication were obtained from [Mrs. GET, fourth grade general education classroom teacher] and consensus rating from [Ms. SET, program’s special education teacher] and [Mrs. Para, 1:1 paraprofessional assisting STUDENT], as these educators have the most direct and frequent observation of STUDENT in general education settings.

Indicators are rated relative to nondisabled classmates in the same general education classes, using the following Likert scale: 3 – All of the time, 2 – Most of the time, 1 – Some of the time, 0 – None of the time, and N/A – Not Applicable.

Indicator	Ms. SET and Mrs. Para	Mrs. GET
Participates in school plays, field trips, and community service activities	N/A	N/A
Participates in classroom and school routines (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance, lunch count, jobs, errands, eating lunch) in typical locations	2	1.5
Participates in classroom activities that are curriculum-based tasks in which age appropriate, general education peers are involved	.5	1
Completes assignments and other work products (with adaptations and modifications) as students without disabilities do	.5	.5
Communicates in a way that is appropriate for his communication level, with appropriate content (e.g., vocabulary) and mode (e.g., speech output, writing) needed for participation in instructional routines:		
Whole-class discussions: Brainstorming, calling out answers, taking notes, engaging in social side talk	1	1
In small groups: Commenting to classmates, sharing information, taking notes, socializing	0	0
When called on by the teacher: Sharing information	1	1
In nonacademic activities: Transitions, lunch, recess, brain breaks	1	2
N/A selected for 1 item. Scale adjusted to 21 points	6/21 28.6%	7/21 33.3%

Educator ratings (28.6% and 33.3%) suggest that STUDENT is participating about a third of the time he is in general education settings. Based on the current and prior observations, this is more likely to occur during nonacademic routines (Pledge of Allegiance, lunch) and social communicating with select peers

during lunch, recess, transitions, or if approached by a peer in the general education classroom. This is less likely to occur during curricular-based activities, completing assignments, in small-group or whole-class discussions, or when called on by the teacher. His low participation may be affected by things such as: (a) his sense of membership and belonging in the community, (b) his relationship and interactions with educators and classmates, (c) the design and delivery of general education curriculum, and (d) the supports that bridge his individual-learner characteristics with the first three factors.

Analysis of Observed Participation Opportunities in General Education:

The second method used in this assessment, to describe STUDENT's participation and explore ways to enhance or expand, is analysis of observed participation in general education. STUDENT was observed in three blocks of his scheduled time in general education classes:

1. Snack and share in Grade 4 classroom, 10:12-10:29 a.m. (17 min)
2. Music in music classroom, 10:39-11:21 a.m. (42 min)
3. Quiet time, celebration, read aloud in Grade 4 classroom, 1:57-2:39 p.m. (42 min)

During each observation, opportunities for STUDENT's participation were identified in segments (rather than a judgement about the entire observation time). Segments were identified based on the communication and interactions among educators and students, curriculum, instructional arrangement, etc. In STUDENT's observations, it was the actions of the teacher, para, or a peer that triggered the beginning or end of most participation segment. For example:

- **Teacher Action.** Example - Music teacher guided students' skill development using different songs paired with a video cueing system. Each time the teacher introduced a new song, it came with specific expectations and practice for students. Then the teacher would debrief that skill practice with the students. Each of the songs was a participation segment.
- **Para Action.** Example – Para scaffolded a transition from STUDENT watching a video on his Chromebook (ending one segment) then engaged STUDENT in making a puzzle (another segment), then engaged him with a choice of two books.
- **Peer Action.** Example – One classmate, "R", initiated interactions with STUDENT that created unique opportunities to communicate and participate. From the peer initiation through termination of the interaction was a participation segment.

The complete set of observation notes are attached in Appendix A.

Each participation segment is rated using the following guidance:

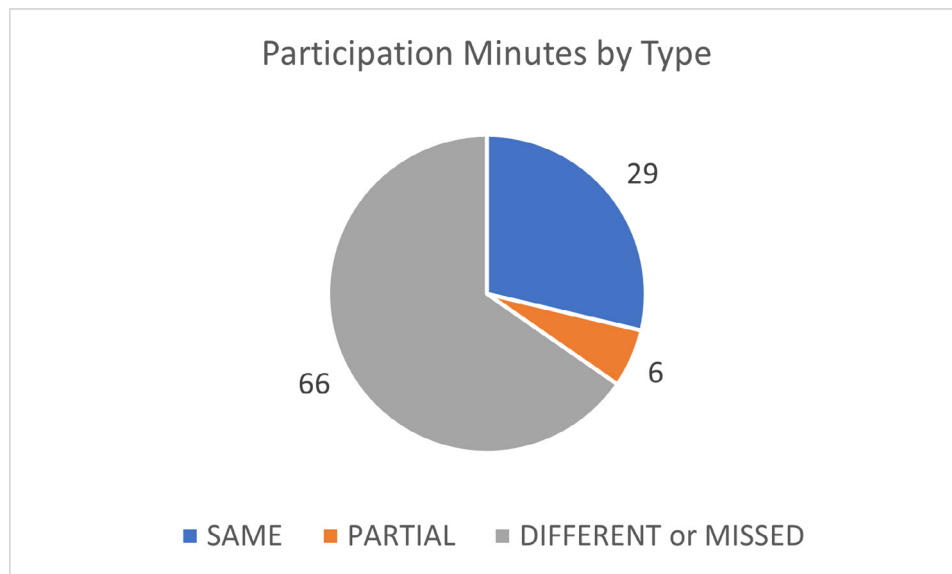
- **Same** – Student's participation was supported to be on the same topic, instructional arrangement (whole class, small group, peer-partner, independent), materials (adapted as needed), teaching methods (with embedded SDI as needed), and would reasonably be seen as commensurate with other students.
- **Partial** – An aspect of participation does not appear to be supported (same topic, instructional arrangement, materials, and methods) and/or the student is intermittently engaging or communicating in the opportunity.
- **Different** – Essential or most aspects of participation are not present and supported. This includes purposefully designed lessons in which the student is working on a parallel activity. This rating would also be applied if:

- there are discrete communication bids that are missed (e.g., peer approaches and makes a comment or asks a question to the focus student but the student does not respond or is not supported to respond), or
- the student is not in the room or leaves the room (for personal care, therapy, dysregulated or behavioral episode, etc.)

The following table and pie chart show the results from three observations (19 participation segments; 101 instructional minutes).

Type	Segments		Minutes	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Same	6	31	29	29
Partial	2	11	6	6
Different	11	58	66	65
	TOTAL = 19		TOTAL = 101	

STUDENT’s participation met the criteria for **Same** about a third of the time. (Consistent with the educators’ perceptions when rating the indicators—see prior section.) STUDENT’s participation met the criteria for **Different** nearly two thirds of the time.



Descriptions of Participation Supports During Same, Partial, and Different:

In the six participation segments rated as **Same**, it was common to have (a) the teacher directly acknowledging STUDENT and his peers directly engaging him; (b) the para using positive affect and showing sincere interest in the classroom activities—and being highly responsive to teacher instructions so she could foster his participation; (c) materials that aligned to the general curriculum and were accessible for his learner characteristics; and (d) direct modeling and instruction on how to participate.

- **Snack** – The teacher specifically asked him to stay and eat snack with the class. Most students were milling about and settling in, some were seated at their desks doing something independently, and others were engaged with social chatter. This provided multiple ways to participate and included a familiar way for him to participate (doing something independent at desk). Two classmates specifically approached and engaged STUDENT.
- **Music** – The para monitored what the teacher was doing and requesting of the class. She responded quickly to setting up the Chromebook, cuing up software and apps, and putting away items. With a joyously positive affect, the para provided direct modeling and instruction on the way to participate and supported it with additional verbal reminders, scaffolds, gestures, and fading support to promote his independence. The para efficiently navigated his token system. Additionally, the teacher connected with STUDENT, calling out “Good, STUDENT.”
- **Quiet time** – A classmate approached, sat with, and talked with STUDENT.

In the two participation segments rated as **Partial**, STUDENT was either not present for a portion of the segment or participating with his para but not his class. In both instances, he missed the directions provided by the teacher.

In the 11 participation segments rated as **Different**, it was common to see STUDENT being engaged by his para; using materials disconnected from the classroom activity; having no tangible materials to reference for the classroom activity; having no visuals for multi-step activities; in physical arrangements that did not direct his visual attention to the source of instruction; having no explicit marker (like a visual schedule) to convey what was expected or how to participate; being with classmates who were doing something based on prior work that STUDENT was not present for; and/or being in a situation in which the skill required for participation (like speaking in a group) is not a strength of STUDENT’s. Additionally, STUDENT missed several participation segments because he left or hadn’t yet arrived to class.

Summary and Recommendations:

In summary, STUDENT’s current participation in general education classrooms has increased substantially compared to a year ago. Like other students, STUDENT’s participation is affected by many things, including his sense of belonging and connection with classmates and teachers; the design and delivery of general curriculum, including materials and instructional arrangements; purposeful facilitation of his communication; his unique profile of strengths and needs as a learner; and how his learner characteristics are supported through advance planning and preparation. Some initial recommendations to discuss with the team include:

1. Train and monitor paras to follow the classroom teacher’s directions and instruction. Paras are bridge builders in the general education classrooms.
2. Classroom teachers: Connect directly with STUDENT and provide specific praise for his effort, use of important strategies (like participating actively), or use of his communication device.
3. Classroom teachers: Keep his needs as a learner in mind when selecting or designing materials for a lesson.
4. Classroom teachers: Provide additional visual representations to support text-heavy or auditory-heavy information and provide visual lists when asking the class to do multiple things at once.

When that's not possible through advanced planning, collaborate in the moment with the para to support text- or auditory-heavy information.

5. Use visuals that connect STUDENT to the topic of instructional focus of the class. (e.g., in music, the color of his tube matched a color on the song/video display). Limit and discontinue activities or materials that are not related to what is happening in the general education setting (e.g., during read aloud, provide character and event pictures related to the story or a storyboard to follow instead of puzzles and different books).
6. Use within-event schedules that convey the significant components of an activity. It would be extra-beneficial for STUDENT if these were reinforced by the classroom teacher by using matching language to mark the sub-activities within a class, a schedule block, or a lesson/activity.
7. Provide clear, slow-paced directions for STUDENT. Support less familiar verbal directions with visual representations.
8. Be familiar with the basics of his communication device and how to interact with him using it. This applies to all educators and staff in regular instructional exchanges with STUDENT.
9. Staff directly supporting STUDENT during instructional activities: Encourage his use of the device by being more fluent than he is with the device. To exceed his current performance, staff would need to be able to make four-word sentences using core vocabulary and/or frequently occurring context-specific vocabulary with ease.
10. Model use of the AAC device. Models should match his current performance of two to three words, when possible. It may help staff to learn key vocabulary that carries the most communication power (i.e., core vocabulary, including pronouns, helping verbs, action verbs, and referent words)
11. Communication partners: When STUDENT's speech is unclear and his partner does not understand, sincerely request or encourage him to use his device to attempt a clarification (e.g., STUDENT, I don't understand what you're saying. Please use the device. I want to understand).
12. When it's possible, have STUDENT enter class before it is filled with lots of other people (e.g., have him toward the front of the line going from his fourth grade class to specials and vice versa). This may reduce the overwhelm and his tendency to retreat during a transition to enter a busy or less familiar classroom.
13. Specify a plan of which supports for STUDENT's access to the general curriculum can be accomplished by differentiation by the general education teachers (e.g., adding visual representation of content or process steps) and when it requires embedding specially designed instruction (e.g., significant adaptations to materials).
14. When possible, utilize circular arrangements for whole-class and small-group activities that require listening to one person at a time. This would shape STUDENT's visual attention and make it more obvious that people are taking turns.
15. Aide and fade. Provide the assistance needed, then fade and monitor from a few steps away. Increase the distance from STUDENT during tasks and interactions where he has demonstrated greater independence (like snack and talking one-to-one with classmates). After you've modeled and instructed something, tell STUDENT, "You try."

Revisions to these recommendations may be appropriate, following the review and information that all team members share during this round of evaluations. I look forward to collaborating with the team as we celebrate STUDENT's current participation in general education and plan for what he may show us as we enhance supports for his participation.