

Equal Access to a Common and Differentiated Learning Environment

All students learn the same curriculum in the regular classroom environment from a transdisciplinary team with instruction and assessment differentiated for the student's individual needs.

Vision Statement

We envision all of our classrooms are truly inclusive! One size is never presumed to fit all. Multiple points of access allow students with disabilities or gifts to learn challenging content at the appropriate level. Special educators and regular educators are experts in the art of co-teaching. High levels of differentiated instruction and assessment exist in every classroom.

The District and schools are organized, and staff is assigned, in a manner that best supports inclusionary practices.

All District staff is receiving the professional development and administrative support necessary to ensure high levels of inclusion and high learning expectations for all students in the general curriculum. Inclusion is seamless and the cultural norm.

An inclusive classroom is a learning environment in which all students participate, each with their individual strengths and weaknesses, together with a team of teachers, including regular educators, special educators, speech and language therapists, physical therapists, and other specialists, as appropriate. We believe that an inclusive learning environment provides the most effective educational outcome for all students. Inclusion increases the educational outcomes for ALL students.

When special educators join the classroom teacher to collaborate and instruct as a team, student-to-teacher ratios are dramatically reduced and instruction is more effectively customized for each student in the classroom. When special educators and regular educators co-plan and co-teach, best instructional practices are demanded and supported by a team approach. This approach allows all students to access the classroom curriculum. Inclusive classrooms encourage and, in fact, require differentiated instruction and assessment that benefits every student in the classroom. This benefit extends to students who have academic difficulty but who have not been identified as disabled and also benefits students with greater than average skills by providing more challenging content and assignments.

Opportunity for Improvement

Our current “pull out” practices do not meet the requirements of law, but more importantly, their continued existence denies all students the better instruction that can be provided in an inclusion model with its benefits of teaming, smaller student-to-teacher ratios and the higher capacity that teams and teachers can develop to better differentiate instruction and assessment.

Root Cause: Inclusionary practices are not yet common

Educators as a whole have not yet developed a commitment to inclusion, and the necessary co-teaching skills and teaching practices.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide a clear vision for an Inclusionary educational model.	District and School Committee set a clear direction for an inclusive learning environment anchored by transdisciplinary teams.
Build effective transdisciplinary teams (special educators play equally important role in teaching all students).	Increase co-teaching of regular education teachers, special education teachers, and therapists.
Provide professional development to all teachers in co-teaching and integrated therapies approach and continue to spiral training indefinitely.	For FY09, 75% of regular educators and 100% of special educators will participate in formal co-teaching training.
Provide co-planning time for co-teaching and differentiation.	Apply for an Expanded Learning Time grant (a new Patrick Administration program.)
Provide professional development on differentiated instruction and the continuum of students' learning styles, abilities, strengths and weaknesses.	Ensure that Differentiated Instruction is emphasis of professional development on inclusionary practices, co-teaching, and integrated therapies.
Fully utilize all assets and human resources to support inclusion.	Restructure school and staff schedules to insure special educators work to the maximum degree in classrooms.
Increase clerical support to make better use of SPED teachers' time.	Train STAT (Student Teacher Assistance Team) teams to work in an inclusive environment Using a 3-Tier approach to classroom intervention for learning difficulties. (see appendix #)

Root Cause: Lack of specificity in School Committee planning to support inclusion

Insufficient long-term planning and vision regarding inclusion. Newburyport community doesn't fully

appreciate the value or need for an inclusionary model.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>School Committee sets vision and expectations through planning and goals documents and serves to educate community on value and necessity of inclusionary practices in our schools.</p>	<p>Complete a detailed planning exercise regarding common, differentiated instructional model. What do we want to achieve each year? What will it cost? A detailed and clear plan will help increase knowledge about the idea and therefore increase chances for sufficient funding.</p> <p>The School Committee runs a communication and education program on inclusive learning environment and multidisciplinary teams for the Newburyport community.</p> <p>The School Committee adopts equity policy.</p>

Root Cause: Not all students have sufficient challenge

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Differentiated instruction and assessment provides appropriately challenging work for every student.</p>	<p>All actions as above in <u>Inclusionary Practices Are Not Yet Common Practice</u> and as below in <u>Differentiated Instruction is More Difficult When the Number of Students in a Class Increases.</u></p>

Root Cause: Differentiated instruction is more difficult when the number of students in a class increases

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Maximize co-teaching potential to lower effective class size..</p>	<p>For those classes that implement co-teaching in FY09, evaluate the approach's effectiveness, especially as it impacts effective class size and teacher-student ratio.</p>
<p>Make better use of existing staff</p>	<p>Block schedule special educators to maximize opportunities for co-teaching.</p>

Root Cause: Shortage of formative assessment data for students limits differentiated instruction

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
See strategies for differentiated assessment, above.	Focus curriculum map work on development of common formative assessments
Develop comprehensive and clear expectations for learning or learning outcomes in all curriculum maps.	

Root Cause: Areas of disconnect between grades and standards-based Performance

Parents and teachers cite a lack of congruence between report card grades and actual performance. Notably this occurs when students with high grades in a subject score poorly on MCAS or other standardized tests.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Assess progress towards performance-based learning outcomes and grading.</p> <p>Have Middle School and High School administration and leadership consider problem and brainstorm solutions for future School Improvement Plan (SIP).</p>	<p>Have administration, staff and parents of grades PK through 12 establish goals to assess the effectiveness of grading and their grade reporting system, with the goal of having grading and report cards reflect the actual progress of the student. Assessment should pay specific attention to the correlation between grades and performance on standardized testing, including MCAS. Place specific goals into FY10 School Improvement Plans (SIPs).</p>

Root Cause: Multiple strategies that differentiate learning are not used consistently across the District

Instructional strategies are not sufficiently differentiated to allow students to utilize different learning styles and “brain styles”, and to pursue unique interests and projects that foster engagement.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Encourage use of a variety of differentiated instructional strategies, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple intelligence learning and visual/listening/kinetic • Professional development and peer-to-peer teacher coaching • Student-centered instructional groupings that encourage peer teaching • Project based learning groups 	<p>Administrators and teachers use “walk-throughs” to encourage and support these practices by providing feedback to teachers.</p> <p>Provide professional development for instructional supervisors on research-based best practices that support learning, especially differentiated instructional strategies.</p>
<p>Consensus curriculum maps are richer in description of differentiated assessment and variety of assessments.</p>	<p>Focus curriculum map work on common formative assessment.</p>