

K214 Michael Friedsam

FINAL REPORT



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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of K214 Michael Friedsam conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research (AIR). This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as being in corrective action under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

The audit focused on access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities (SWDs). It examined curriculum, instruction, professional development, and staffing practices through the multiple lenses of data collection and analysis. Findings in these areas served as a starting point to facilitate conversations among school community staff in order to identify areas for improvement and ways to generate plans for improvement. This report includes an overview of the audit process, a description of the key findings identified in collaboration with the school, and recommendations for addressing these issues. It is entirely up to the school to determine how to implement the recommendations. At the conclusion of each recommendation, we have included examples from the field based on the experiences of AIR staff that we believe illustrate the implementation of an aspect of the recommendation.

About K214 Michael Friedsam

K214 Michael Friedsam is located in New York City, in Brooklyn (Community School District 19). The school serves 1,074 students in Grades PK–5. Ten percent of students are identified as SWDs. In 2010–11, Michael Friedsam’s accountability status was “Corrective Action (Year 1),” due, in part, to the failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) for its population of SWDs.

Audit Process at K214 Michael Friedsam

The key findings were identified through an audit process. Data were collected using the following guiding themes as the focus of the audit: curriculum, instruction, professional development, and staffing. Following data collection, AIR staff facilitated a co-interpretationSM meeting on May 25, 2011, attended by 13 staff members from K214 Michael Friedsam. Staff members included both administrators and teachers.

Co-interpretation is a collaborative process that helps school teams understand and use the data gathered by the audit team to generate findings. During the meeting, the following data reports were presented and reviewed:

- Special Education Site Visit Report (based on a document review, observations, and interviews), which focuses on the special education program and SWDs.
- Special Education Teacher Survey Report, based on compiled responses from surveys completed by 71 teachers, including 25 teachers of SWDs.

The school team studied the individual data reports and used this information to develop key findings about the school's strengths and challenges related to educating students with disabilities. Participants rated the findings based on the following criteria:

- Is the key finding identified as one of the most critical problems faced by the school and addressed by the audit?
- If resolved, would student achievement improve sufficiently to move the school out of corrective action?
- If resolved, will there be a measurable, positive impact?

In the remainder of this report, we describe the key findings that were identified by school staff as their top priorities, and present recommendations for the school to consider incorporating into their Comprehensive Educational Plan.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, participants at co-interpretation determined a set of final key findings. These key findings, which are based on the voting that occurred during the co-interpretation meeting, are detailed in this section.

Critical Key Findings

These key findings were identified by co-interpretation participants and were prioritized by the group for action planning.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

None of the teachers interviewed described formal, structured opportunities for special education and general education teachers to meet.

Critical Key Finding 1 was identified as a top priority by the majority of the co-interpretation participants. Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from the Special Education Site Visit Report. Additional findings supported by information from the Special Education Teacher Survey Report reveal that special education and general education teachers do not meet frequently. Interview data also reveal that teachers at K214 are collaborating with one another frequently, although largely through informal means. Critical Key Finding 1 reflects a lack of scheduled time for general education and special education teachers to meet and collaborate regarding the needs of SWDs.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

According to document reviews, 14 of the 40 individualized education programs (IEPs) do not identify appropriate instructional accommodations for accessing the general education curriculum.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by document review data from the Special Education Site Visit Report. This key finding refers to the usefulness of IEPs for planning and informing instruction. Survey and interview data reveal that teachers generally are looking at IEPs on a monthly basis to inform their instruction. It is possible that with improved usefulness of the IEPs, teachers might use them even more frequently to inform their instruction.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

According to surveys, less than half of general education and special education teachers agree that there is a new student orientation program for SWDs.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by data from the Special Education Teacher Survey Report. Although the data come from only one source, this finding was prioritized as one of the major concerns facing the school.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

More than half of the teachers interviewed and surveyed indicated that they want more professional development related to SWDs, including opportunities to collaborate with teachers from other schools.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by data from both the Special Education Site Visit Report and Special Education Teacher Survey Report. Although data indicate that teachers have found professional development on a number of topics helpful, data also show that teachers would like to receive additional professional development. Specifically, teachers would like to receive additional professional development on topics related to teaching SWDs as well as opportunities to collaborate with teachers from other schools.

Positive Key Findings

Positive key findings are listed because it is to the school's advantage to approach its action planning from a strengths-based perspective and to leverage what has been working. AIR encourages the school to realistically acknowledge what it is doing well and effectively and to use those strengths as a springboard for approaching recommendations-based action planning.

The top three positive key findings according to the vote at co-interpretation were as follows:

1. Observation and interview data indicate that the majority of teachers differentiate instruction.
2. The majority of teachers surveyed report using data to drive instruction.
3. Interviews, survey data, and document reviews indicate that the school focuses on providing professional development related to the instruction of students with disabilities, and a vast majority of teachers reported that the professional development they received was effective and meaningful.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

The key findings determined through the co-interpretation process with K214 Michael Friedsam led AIR to make four recommendations. For each recommendation, additional information is provided on specific actions that the school may consider during its action-planning process. These recommendations are supported by currently available research and evidence. Resources and references that support these recommendations are provided.

The order does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations. Also, there is no one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings were considered as a group, and these recommendations are offered as those that would likely have the greatest positive impact on student performance.

Recommendation 1: Collaboration

AIR recommends that K214 Michael Friedsam consider options for increasing opportunities for general education and special education teachers to meet and work together. This includes both shared professional development around strategies for working with SWDs in inclusive classrooms and channels of communication to discuss particular school and classroom issues.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Collaboration among teachers and other school professionals may be defined as the manner in which, and extent to which, members of the school interact in their approach to their work, and is characterized by authentic interactions that are professional in nature (Marzano, 2003). These behaviors may include openly sharing failures and mistakes, demonstrating respect for one another, and constructively analyzing and criticizing practices and procedures in an effort to improve teaching and learning in a school (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). Marzano cites the need for a number of school norms that will enable teachers and other staff to effectively work to improve their schools—norms such as deciding how staff will resolve conflicts, how staff will address and solve professional problems, how staff will communicate to third parties about other staff members, and how staff will behave during professional meetings (e.g., staff meetings and professional development). Lambert (2003) identifies teachers who have a high degree of skill in this area as possessing a shared vision, resulting in the following: program coherence; inquiry-based use of data to inform decisions and practice; broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility reflected in roles and actions; reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation; and high or steadily improving student achievement.

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links to Critical Key Finding 1, in which data show a need to provide more established communication between general education and special education teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to increase collaboration among teachers around working with SWDs:

1. Provide multiple avenues for structured teacher communication, such as:

- Shared planning time during the school day that will enable content area teachers to share information with special education teachers about content to be covered and to share ideas that will benefit all students
- A listserv or other electronic method for teachers to quickly relay information to one another
- A system for teachers to note any concerns or issues related to specific students that can be easily communicated among staff
- A joint general education/special education team that plans together regularly to ensure coverage across content areas and pacing that benefits all students

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Educators' Perceptions of Collaborative Planning Processes for Students With Disabilities

<http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/ETD/image/etd1344.pdf>

Educating Students With Disabilities in General Education Classrooms: A Summary of the Research

<http://www.rrcprogram.org/content/view/242/47/>

Collaborative Teaching: Special Education for Inclusive Classrooms

<http://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewMaterial.htm?id=437346>

Site Visits: Seeing Schools in Action

<http://fcsn.org/peer/ess/sitevisitsib.html>

Collaboration between general and special education: Making it work

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1097>

2. Offer formal and regularly scheduled opportunities for collaboration around specific areas of need related to SWDs. This action step can be accomplished by:

- Conducting a needs assessment to determine topics for sessions (discussed in greater detail under Recommendation 4)
- Training staff regarding effective communication and collaboration skills (e.g., active listening, establishing appropriate agendas, effective use of meeting time)
- Offering the sessions during times when general education and special education teachers are available to participate after school
- Ensuring that sessions are interactive and allow teachers opportunities to learn from one another
- Providing opportunities for teachers to give feedback on the sessions so that adjustments can be made to better address the needs of students
- Having an administrator participate to show the school's support for collaboration

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

It is 12:15 on a Wednesday afternoon at Highland Park Elementary School. The fourth grade team has assembled, just as they do every week at this time, to collaboratively create ELA plans for the upcoming week. Their students are currently in art, music, or physical education class, which gives them uninterrupted time to do this. They are joined, for at least a part of their planning time, by the ESL and special education teachers who work with their grade. The school's reading specialist chairs the meeting. Each grade will participate in a planning session such as this every week. The school's administrators sometimes join them, as time permits. Everyone knows they need to bring their curriculum guides, appropriate student materials, plan books, and any other materials they will need. They will complete a planning template for the week, which is online on the school's intranet, where they will also post their plans. Each week, one person will act as "scribe" and type in the minutes in each section of the template.

The first two categories on the template address essential learning and mastery objectives. These are from the curriculum guide and are non-negotiable, so they are typed in first. This week they will continue to develop reading comprehension skills through exposure to a variety of texts and determine important ideas and messages in literary texts. After this, the planning becomes more discretionary as to how they will do this. In addition to reading, they will determine their lesson plans for writing, word work, fluency, and vocabulary.

The focus of instruction for this week will be teaching about historical fiction. Teachers will begin with whole-group instruction in the form of read-alouds in this genre and as whole classes complete graphic organizers that contrast fictional versus historical characters. At this point, the ESL teacher becomes concerned. Her intermediate-level students were not speaking English very well when they covered this material last year, and they worked with simplified materials. They have not been exposed to this material in as advanced a manner as the other students. She says that she will need to work with her students and preview this material with them so they can participate successfully with the other students. Time to do this is negotiated, and they move on to discuss their small-group guided reading instruction and the strategies they will teach this week. One teacher is worried, as she is new and has not taught this material yet, and she is not certain how to do it. The reading specialist volunteers to come into her classroom this week and model a strategy that will help her.

They plan their fluency focus, word work goals, and vocabulary in a similar fashion and record the information in the template. Although the wording is brief, it is complete enough for anyone to read and understand what they are doing. They discuss this week's writing, which is focused on researching famous people to write biographies. It is time for students to begin drafting. The special educator knows which of students' IEP accommodations call for assistive technology for drafting during this part of the writing process. She will work with these students during this time and use Co:Writer software to help them with this task.

Teachers then divide up responsibilities. One teacher will visit the library and find appropriate texts to use as read alouds. Another will make the posters for the graphic organizers they will need to help students distinguish between historical and fictional characters. Another will create a formative assessment for the grade to use at the end of the week to determine student mastery levels. One of the other teachers will make copies of the rubrics the grade uses for drafting, which students can staple into their Writing Notebooks. It is almost 1:15. They are finished for today. The notes are posted on the intranet for anyone in the school to read so they know what is going on in fourth grade. It is time for the teachers to pick up their students and return to their classrooms.

Recommendation 2: Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

AIR recommends that K214 Michael Friedsam take steps to support both general and special education teachers in the effective use of IEPs to inform instruction for SWDs.

LINK TO RESEARCH

In order for teachers to effectively use students' IEPs to guide instruction, it is critical to include information about appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications. The terms "accommodation" and "modification" are often confused in general conversations regarding the needs of students with disabilities and should be clearly delineated in the IEP.

Accommodations provide access and allow students with disabilities to learn all of the same content as peers in the general education curriculum (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). Making decisions about which accommodations will be used by students begins with making good instructional decisions that are informed by gathering and reviewing information about the student, including present level of performance and disability (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe, & Hall, 2005). Accommodations should allow students with disabilities to demonstrate their skill levels without being hindered by their disability (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Capizzi, 2005; Thurlow et al., 2005). Accommodations should be available in all content areas related to a student's disability (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). For example, if a student requires the use of oral and visual instructions for assignments, he or she must have these available in all content classes as well as support classes, such as art. Accommodations may also be used for testing (i.e., state and local exams) and should be listed in a student's IEP and implemented in the classroom.

Modifications change the expectations of content, learner achievement, and outcomes (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000) and are therefore used for fewer students. An even smaller group of students may require an individualized set of content goals. Modifications that are used for testing must be listed in the student's IEP (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000).

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links directly to Critical Key Finding 2, in which document reviews noted that a large percentage of IEPs did not include appropriate instructional accommodations.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to support teachers in the effective use of IEPs to inform instruction for SWDs:

- 1. Provide professional development to special and general education teachers on the writing and interpretation of IEPs. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Offering workshops on IEP writing to special education teachers and other staff who are responsible for writing IEPs. These workshops should focus on designing and including appropriate instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. These instructional accommodations should be based on present levels of

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Contents of the IEP

<http://www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren/IEP/Pages/IEPcontents.aspx>

The IEP Team

<http://www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren/IEP/Pages/team.aspx>

The Short-and-Sweet IEP Overview

<http://www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren/IEP/Pages/overview.aspx>

Writing Quality IEPs: Indicators of Best Practice

http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/d75/iep/Writing_Quality_IEPS.pdf

performance, and processing strengths and weaknesses, specifically stating strategies to accommodate individual learners.

- Offering workshops on IEP interpretation to all teachers who teach SWDs. Specific attention should be given to explaining and demonstrating the use and effectiveness of the included instructional accommodations.
- Using staff development meetings periodically to provide refresher trainings and hold discussions about the use of IEPs to inform instruction.

2. Provide support to teachers in the effective use of IEPs. This action step can be accomplished by:

- Ensuring that all teachers have ready access to copies of IEPs for all SWDs in their classrooms, possibly to include one-page summaries of IEPs written by the special education teacher for the general education teachers of SWDs. This summary sheet would include an evaluation summary, present levels of performance, testing accommodations, recommended instructional accommodations, and any anecdotal information in the IEP that would help guide instruction
- Encouraging special education and general education teachers to review IEPs together during common planning time as a way to share effective strategies for teaching students with disabilities.
- Providing sample lesson plans for teachers and demonstrating how to incorporate accommodations and IEP goals in a lesson.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Ms. Johnson, the special education coordinator at an urban elementary school, became concerned as she spoke with general education teachers that they were not familiar with the IEPs for SWDs in their classrooms and were not using them to guide instruction. She also conducted a review of the school's IEPs and found that although testing accommodations and annual goals were well written, many of the school's IEPs lacked appropriate instructional accommodations for students. Ms. Johnson first met with the school's special education teachers and provided professional development on instructional accommodations, asking each teacher to examine the IEPs for their students and revise or write accommodations as appropriate. She then developed an electronic template for a one-page summary of an IEP and asked each special education teacher to use the template to give an IEP summary to each teacher at the school who worked with a student with a disability.

As the summaries were being distributed to teachers, Ms. Johnson held a training session, during a school-wide faculty meeting, on interpreting IEPs and planning for instruction. At this training, she handed out sample lesson plans that directly linked to individual student goals and accommodations. Ms. Johnson also paired each general education teacher with a special education teacher at the same grade level and asked them to meet once a week to make sure that the needs of SWDs in the general education classes were being met.

Through the use of an observation protocol and teacher interviews during a six-month period, Ms. Johnson noticed that general education teachers had significantly increased their use of IEPs to guide instruction. The teachers were also coming to IEP meetings better informed and more able to discuss the impact of instructional accommodations on the SWDs in their classrooms. Ms. Johnson also conducted a second IEP review and found that almost all IEPs included appropriate instructional accommodations.

Recommendation 3: Supports for New SWDs

AIR recommends that K214 Michael Friedsam review and adjust its procedures for welcoming new SWDs and their families into the school. This includes activities with the new students as well as teachers and parents.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

ALLIANCE National Parent
Technical Assistance Center
(NPTAC)

[http://www.
parentcenternetwork.org/
national/aboutus.html](http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/national/aboutus.html)

*Keeping the Committed: The
Importance of Induction and
Support Programs for New
Special Educators*

[http://www.personnelcenter.
org/pdf/keepcomm.pdf](http://www.personnelcenter.org/pdf/keepcomm.pdf)

Families and Advocates
Partnership for Education
(FAPE)

<http://www.fape.org/>

*Transitioning Students with
Disabilities from Middle to
High School*

[http://journals.cec.sped.
org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?
article=1393&context=
tecplus& sei-redir=1#search
="orientation+for+students+
with+disabilities+research".](http://journals.cec.sped.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1393&context=tecplus&sei-redir=1#search=orientation+for+students+with+disabilities+research)

*Parent Guide to the ESL
Standards for Pre-K-12
Students: Introduction and
Common Questions*

[http://schools.dcsd.k12.
nv.us/pdc/documents/
parent_guide.pdf](http://schools.dcsd.k12.nv.us/pdc/documents/parent_guide.pdf)

National Early Childhood
Transition Center

[http://www.hdi.uky.edu/SF/
NECTC/Home.aspx](http://www.hdi.uky.edu/SF/NECTC/Home.aspx)

LINK TO RESEARCH

Both students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) often share the experience of entering a new school, which typically requires adjustment to significantly different social and academic situations than they have previously experienced. SWDs may be entering a new school building to attend a special program. ELLs may be the children of immigrant parents and are entering a school that is not only new to them but also culturally very different from their previous experiences. Research indicates that positive school adjustment is important for a number of reasons. Students who develop supportive school-based relationships with teachers and other staff, as well as peers, are more likely to engage in behaviors that are necessary to do well in school, such as attending class, completing school work, and doing homework. Researchers have demonstrated the significant impact that such behaviors have on students' grades (Suarez-Orosco, 2006). In addition, students who develop a positive attitude with regard to a new secondary school are more likely to graduate (Watt, Roessingh, & Bossetti, 1996).

A recent study also found a relationship between a sense of school-belonging and mental health. The study found that a greater sense of school belonging among adolescents was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Several researchers have also pointed out the interrelationship between children's in-school experience and out-of-school well-being (Gilligan, 2000).

Topics for orienting students who are entering a school building for the first time need to include use of a locker; school conventions such as lining up, using staircases, and using planners and other materials that promote self-regulation; the roles of school personnel and who to go to with specific problems; what to do in emergency drills; and procedures for changing into special clothes for physical education classes (Short & Boyson, 2004).

Parents also need orientation to a new school. They need to know what courses their students will be taking, who their children's teachers will be, and who to contact at the school if they believe their child might be experiencing problems of one type or another.

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links to Critical Key Finding 3, in which data show a need to provide more services for orientation when new SWDs enter the school.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to provide orientation services to ensure successful integration of new SWDs into the school:

- 1. Ensure that teachers receive the proper training and support for teaching SWDs in their classrooms. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Ensuring that teachers receive copies of IEPs for all SWDs in their classrooms, including new students
 - Providing opportunities for teachers to meet with parents, fellow teachers, and other service providers who have worked or are working with each new SWD
 - Offering professional development to general education teachers in inclusive classrooms on how to meet the needs of SWDs in their classrooms
- 2. Provide opportunities for parent involvement, including:**
 - Offering an orientation to parents of SWDs when their children enter the school or change classrooms. This should include the classroom teacher(s) as well as all other service providers who will be working with the children.
 - Providing channels for parents to communicate regularly with teachers about the progress of their SWDs.
 - Offering materials and resources to ensure parental awareness of the supports and services available for SWDs.
- 3. Offer orienting activities to the students themselves, such as:**
 - Ensuring that new SWDs participate in all orientation activities available to their non-disabled peers
 - Allowing additional time for SWDs to become familiar and comfortable with the classrooms, teachers, and other service providers
 - Introducing a “buddy” to new SWDs and ELLs who can help orient them to the classroom and to meet and interact with their peers

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Sam is entering Columbus Elementary School as a fifth grader. He is identified as a student with mild autism, and academically Sam is relatively high functioning. Sam's disability often affects his ability to interact appropriately with his peers, and Sam is beginning to view himself as a misfit, which has begun to affect his self-confidence. To his mother, Sam appears comfortable about entering his new school, but she worries about Sam's transition into such a large school, without the support he was receiving in his previous, much-smaller school. Will he be able to find his way around and ask for help if he can't? How will other students react to Sam's inappropriate verbalizations and behaviors? His parents are concerned, too, about what academic supports will be in place for Sam because at his last IEP meeting it was agreed that he will no longer have his 1:1 paraprofessional.

Sam's parents receive an e-mail from the school indicating that one week before the opening of school there will be an orientation for all students with disabilities entering Columbus Elementary School for the first time, and their parents. Sam and his parents are encouraged to attend and are assured that, along with refreshments provided by the PTA, there will be an opportunity to meet the people who will be responsible for Sam's day-to-day success.

When Sam and his parents arrived at the school for orientation, they were met at the front door by Jacob, a member of a fifth-grade student service organization at the school, Students for Students, whose mission is to provide academic and social support for students with disabilities at their school. The members of Students for Students are academic and social leaders in the fifth grade and are respected by both peers and staff. Jacob very comfortably encouraged Sam to join him on a scavenger hunt through the school while Sam's parents, along with other parents of students with disabilities, met the school counselor, the special education coordinator, and the fifth-grade special education and general education staff.

The school counselor provided a short introduction to policies and procedures at Columbus Elementary School and also offered a description of Students for Students. Sam's parents learned that Jacob was assigned to be Sam's buddy throughout the school year, including partnering with Sam for academic support in the co-teaching classroom to which Sam had been assigned, as well as providing a presence and support for Sam in the cafeteria and other out-of-classroom experiences as needed. Then, Sam's parents had an opportunity to meet with the special education teacher and general education teacher on Sam's co-teaching team. The teachers supplied Sam's parents with information regarding academic expectations for Sam, as well as a written description of the behavior management plan that Sam's parents had discussed with the IEP team at the end of last school year. It was very comforting to Sam's parents to realize that there had been ample communication between Sam's elementary school IEP team and his new teachers.

While this was occurring, Sam and Jacob participated together in a scavenger hunt throughout the school, enabling Sam to become familiar with the location of his classroom, the cafeteria, the restrooms, and the crisis management specialist's suite, or the "Code Blue" room as it was known, in case Sam needed a quiet place to "decompress." Throughout the scavenger hunt, Jacob assured Sam that during fifth grade he would be with Sam during the entire school day, not "in his face," but available if Sam just needed a buddy to help him get used to his new school.

After this orientation, both Sam and his parents were much more confident about a successful start to Sam's school experience. It was especially comforting to Sam's parents when, as they dropped Sam off on the first day of school, Jacob was waiting for him outside the front door of the school.

QUICK LINKS:
Online Sources
for More Information

Improving Access to the General Education Curriculum for Students With Disabilities Through Collaborative Teaching

http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/Co-TeachingModule.asp

Enhancing Your Instruction Through Differentiation Professional Development Module

http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/differentiationmodule.asp

Accommodations, Techniques, and Aids for Learning

<http://www.ldaamerica.org/aboutId/teachers/understanding/accommodations.asp>

National Center on Response to Intervention

<http://www.rti4success.org/>

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring

<http://www.studentprogress.org/default.asp>

Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students

<http://www.nichcy.org/educatechildren/supports/pages/default.aspx>

Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities

http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/accommodations_manual.asp

Recommendation 4: Professional Development

AIR recommends that K214 Michael Friedsam review its current professional development plan and professional supports, and adjust to ensure appropriate coverage of content and support relevant to the instruction of SWDs.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research has found that professional development for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement most when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained, as opposed to one-time workshops (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Effective professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observation, which allows them to be actively involved in their own development and to more frequently practice learned skills (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In addition, professional development is most effective when it is directly connected to teacher practice and focuses on content (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Professional development content areas should align with school improvement needs and goals in order to target improvement to those areas.

Schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement by refining the process by which professional development is offered; ensuring that it is embedded, is sustained, and allows for active teacher participation; and focusing the development on teacher practice and content (Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links to Critical Key Finding 4, requesting that the school increase and improve the professional development support around teaching SWDs.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to adjust the professional development plan to increase the focus on instruction for SWDs:

- 1. Conduct an in-depth needs assessment among staff regarding professional development needs related to the instruction of SWDs. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Conducting a teacher survey asking for specific feedback on previous professional development opportunities related to SWDs, and asking teachers to prioritize needs for additional professional development.
 - Reviewing teacher evaluation data regarding the instruction of SWDs to determine areas in which professional development needs are greatest.
 - Using staff development meetings to get detailed feedback and suggestions from staff about needed professional development related to SWDs.

2. Refine offerings of professional development on instructing SWDs, including the following areas of focus:

- How to identify diverse student needs in inclusive classrooms
- How to utilize differentiation strategies, such as flexible grouping or co-teaching, to meet students' individual instructional needs
- How to monitor student progress and adjust instruction based on student performance, using strategies such as response to intervention (RTI)
- How to use instructional modifications and accommodations in the classroom

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Mrs. Smith, a principal at a large, urban elementary school, designed and implemented a year-long plan for professional development intended to support diverse learners at her school who were not making adequate progress. Mrs. Smith knew that just targeting specialist teachers would not be enough for students to make gains, so she provided professional development focused on differentiated instruction and reaching individual learners to all teachers at the school.

She began with a day of school-wide training on differentiated instruction, presented by the school's literacy coach and assistant principal. This was followed with classroom visits and one-on-one sessions with each teacher in the school conducted by the assistant principal, literacy coach, and herself. In the one-on-one sessions, each teacher was asked to develop a plan for differentiating instruction and meeting the individual needs of SWDs and ELLs over the next nine months. Each teacher was observed once a month for the first four months of school and received coaching from an administrator or the literacy coach, including modeling differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom. At each faculty meeting, additional professional development on differentiated instruction was provided to the entire staff, including training on specific strategies to address student needs that teachers had identified and shared during individual coaching sessions.

By January, Mrs. Smith saw an increase in the use of differentiated instruction as she visited classrooms. Coaching sessions were shifted to be every other month for the second half of the school year and teachers were each asked to commit to visiting and providing feedback to one of their fellow teachers. By the end of the year, teachers agreed that their awareness of and comfort with differentiated instruction had increased and they reported feeling supported by administrators. Mrs. Smith convened a group of general education, special education, and ESL teachers to help write the professional development plan for the next school year. She also sent those teachers to training over the summer with the understanding that they would serve as models and peer coaches for the following year.

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