

BROOKES

Special Education Toolkit

Tips, Insights, & Resources for Educators and School Leaders



INSIDE, find tips and resources on:

- Inclusive Practices
- Adaptations
- Autistic Students
- Executive Function
- Universal Design for Learning
- Co-Teaching

Meet every learner's needs: this year and beyond



DEAR EDUCATOR—

In challenging times, what can you do to advance inclusion and meet every student's unique learning needs, this year and far beyond? We've gathered some practical tips for you, straight from our expert authors on special and inclusive education. On the next pages, explore strategies and guidance on:

- **Strengthening Inclusive Practices**
- **Using Adaptations**
- **Teaching Students on the Autism Spectrum**
- **Supporting Executive Function**
- **Getting Started with UDL**
- **Making the Most of Co-Teaching**



As a pioneering publisher in special education, our priority is getting **practical, cost-effective professional development guides** into your hands so you and your staff can make a real difference for students (**[email your sales rep today about bulk purchases](#)**). And our **free learning resources**—the Brookes Blog, the resource library on our website, our webinars with experts—are always being updated to meet your needs.

Thanks for everything you do to welcome all students and help every learner reach their potential!

Strengthening inclusive practices



Explore our complete collection of
special education titles! →



10 Steps to Jumpstarting Inclusion

Adapted from [It's More Than "Just Being In"](#) by Cheryl M. Jorgensen



Assemble a leadership team that represents key stakeholders. Include a general ed teacher from each grade level; special education case managers; the SLP, OT, and PT; paraprofessionals; your reading specialist; special ed administrator; several parents; and at least one student.



Plan to keep parents informed. This might include giving a monthly update at a PTA meeting, holding information sessions for parents, and talking with parents about the “why” and “how” of inclusive education.



Collect resources. Identify a few key books, research articles, and videos that everyone on the leadership team will read and watch together. (See our full list of professional development resources on special education and inclusion [here](#).)



Visit a local inclusive school. There’s no substitute for seeing inclusion in action! Contact a local school in which all students are included in general education and resources from general and special education are deployed to support all students’ academic and behavioral success.



Hold professional development workshops. Identify which general ed classroom each student will join, and provide monthly workshops for those teachers and other members of students’ education teams. Workshops should focus on topics like best practices, collaborative teaming, UDL, adaptations, and positive behavior supports.





-  **Block out time for instructional planning.** Plan next year’s school calendar so that each student’s education team has 1 hour of common planning time a week. During these meetings, teams will talk about upcoming lessons and units and discuss supports their students will need to fully participate and learn.

-  **Designate planning days over the summer** to get a head start on instructional planning. It will help all students start the year off positively if the team feels they can “hit the ground running” with a couple weeks’ worth of materials and supports already planned.

-  **Develop IEPs** so student goals and objectives are aligned with your state’s learning standards and special education and related services are delivered primarily within the context of general education.

-  **Create a staffing schedule** to maximize the time that special ed teachers and related services providers are in general ed classrooms co-teaching whole group lessons, working with small groups, or providing side-by-side support to individual students.

-  **Encourage before-school get-togethers.** Suggest that each student’s parents host a summer get-together for a few children who will be in their child’s classroom. A low-key playdate with one structured group activity can help children feel they are part of the group before the school year begins.

EXPLORE THE BOOK!

Your school team's practical blueprint for making authentic inclusion happen in K-12 classrooms: bpub.fyi/CJ



4 Things Principals of Great Inclusive Schools Do

Adapted from The Principal's Handbook for Leading Inclusive Schools by Julie Causton & George Theoharis

Set a bold, clear vision of full inclusion.

Great principals of inclusive schools articulate a vision of full, unfettered access to general education for every student—and champion this goal at staff meetings.

Engage in collaborative team planning.

Great principals develop a cohesive plan by creating a special leadership team and inviting general and special education teachers, SLPs, OTs, and paras to take part.

Develop and support teams of professionals.

Great principals develop dynamic teaching teams of special and general educators who co-plan and co-teach. They build time for team collaboration into the school day.

Reduce fragmentation.

Great principals make sure inclusion is woven into the fabric of school culture. Inclusion should inform new curricula, instructional approaches, and programs.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Paula Kluth, author of [You're Going to Love This Kid!](#), Third Edition



Q. What advice do you have for educators who are new to inclusion?

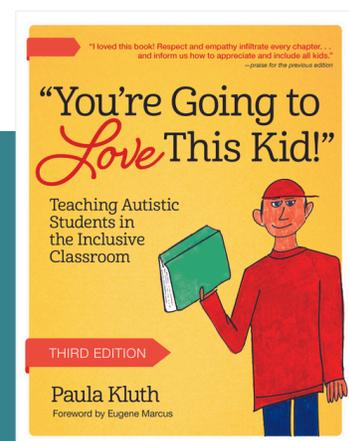
Start with the students.

Teachers may feel overwhelmed when teaching in an inclusive classroom for the first time. But in these moments, it's important to pause and **consider the “why” and the “what” of our work: our students.**

Get to know your students using whatever tools work best for your group. You could use **student surveys**, meet with learners **individually or in small groups**, or engage in formal or informal **classroom observations**. For students with more complex needs, you may need a wider range of tools to learn more about them. Try **home visits, video assessment, or personal portfolios** to gather information.

READ MORE IN THE BOOK

The ultimate guide to supporting autistic students and meeting each learner's individual needs. bpub.fyi/Kluth3e



15 Indicators of Authentic Membership in the Classroom

Adapted from [It's More Than "Just Being In"](#) by Cheryl M. Jorgensen

- The student attends the school they would attend if they did not have a disability.
- The student's class and other activities in which they are involved have a natural proportion of students with and without disabilities (i.e., the same percentage of students with and without disabilities as are present in the school population).
- The student is a valued member of an age-appropriate general education class.
- The student's name is on all class lists, group lists put on the board, job lists, and so forth.
- The student participates in classroom and school routines, such as jobs, errands, eating lunch in the cafeteria, and changing classes, in typical locations and at the same times as classmates without disabilities.
- The student receives accessible print and other learning materials in accessible formats at the same time those materials are provided to students without disabilities.
- The student participates in classroom instruction in similar ways as students without disabilities, including whole class discussion, writing on the board, small-group discussion, and projects. The student is called on by the teacher as frequently as other students in the class.



- The student rides the same school bus as their peers without disabilities, arriving and leaving at the same time.
- The student makes the transition between classes alongside their peers.
- The student progresses through the grades according to the same pattern as students without disabilities.
- The student learns in outside-of-school, age-appropriate, and inclusive environments before the age of 18 only when such instruction is the norm for typical students.
- Related services and specialized instruction are provided within the typical routines of a school day in addition to, not in place of, core general academic instruction.
- Related services are delivered primarily through embedded instruction in the classroom or prior to or after the school day.
- The school is physically accessible so that the student and other individuals with mobility challenges have full access to all activities and environments within the school building.
- The school accommodates the student's sensory and healthcare needs.

8 Little Ways to Be More Inclusive



Break it down. Chunking big tasks down into more manageable parts can prevent some difficulties. A student will probably respond better to a request to “pick up 10 blocks” than to “clean up the play area.”

Adapted from [You're Going to Love This Kid!](#), Third Edition, by Paula Kluth

Prime students for transitions before a change happens. Priming should occur at least a few minutes before a change such as stopping work, changing classes, or interrupting an activity. Model a calm demeanor during transitions and respond flexibly when unexpected events occur.



Adapted from [Unstuck and On Target!](#) by Lynn Cannon, Lauren Kenworthy, Katie C. Alexander, Monica Adler Werner, and Laura Gutermuth Anthony



Switch up your lighting. Use comfortable, natural lighting in your classroom—avoid bright, distracting, or pulsing lights. Consider using floor and table lamps to create welcoming aura and softly highlight students’ work.

Adapted from [True Inclusion with UDL](#) by Patti Kelly Ralabate

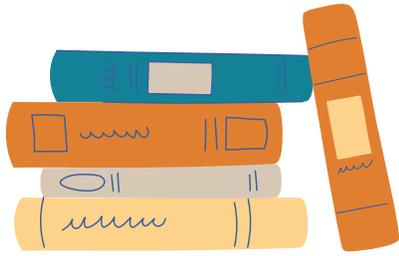
Incorporate music and movement. Reinforce academic concepts with movements that illustrate concepts. Teach and use rhymes, rhythms, and raps to help new information stick.



Adapted from [The Social-Emotional Learning Toolbox](#) by Kathy Perez



8 Little Ways to Be More Inclusive



Acquire a variety of diverse books in your classroom to build ALL students a bridge and help students make personal connections between literature and their own lives.

Adapted from [Comprehensive Literacy for All](#) by Karen Erickson & David Koppenhaver

Incorporate a child's favorite toy or special interest into an activity or lesson. This strategy can be especially useful for learners who perseverate on one activity or have difficulty engaging in new activities.

Adapted from [Just Give Him the Whale!](#) by Paula Kluth



Ask the student for input. Asking what students need keeps them at the center and helps them— and you—better understand and advocate for their learning needs.

Adapted from [The Paraprofessional's Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms](#), Julie Causton & Kate MacLeod

Break up whole-group instruction. Instead, try short bursts of teacher-directed instruction followed by active student engagement in learning activities.



Adapted from [Reimagining Special Education](#) by Jenna M. Rufo & Julie Causton

6

Things Your Students with Disabilities Want You to Do



FREE RESOURCES!



Fair Is Not Always Equal Poster

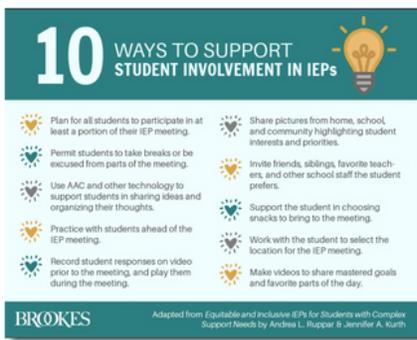
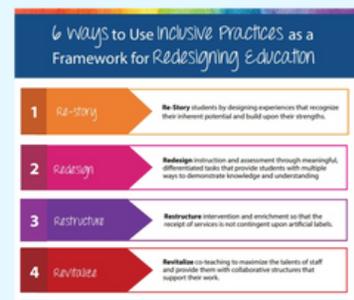
One of our most popular downloads!
Great for printing, displaying, and sharing.

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Inclusive Practices Tip Sheet

6 Ways to Use Inclusive Practices as a Framework for Redesigning Education

DOWNLOAD



IEP Tips

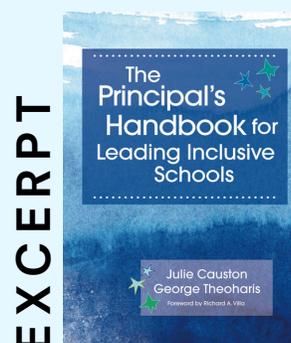
Get tips on navigating the IEP process and involving students and families.

DOWNLOAD

Leadership Guidance

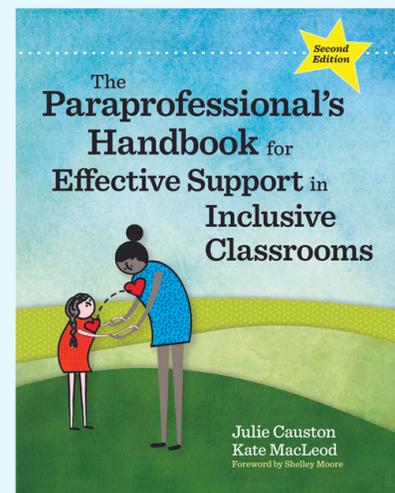
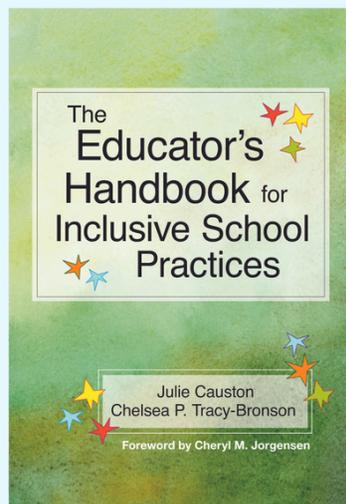
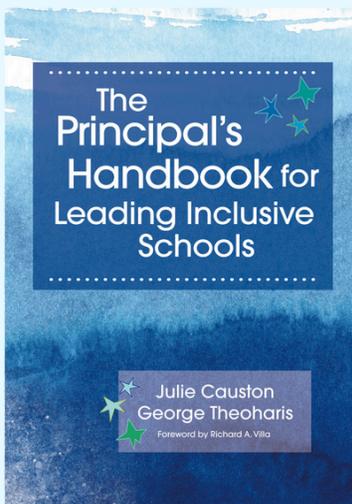
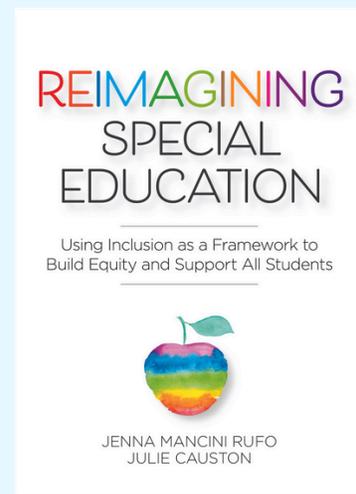
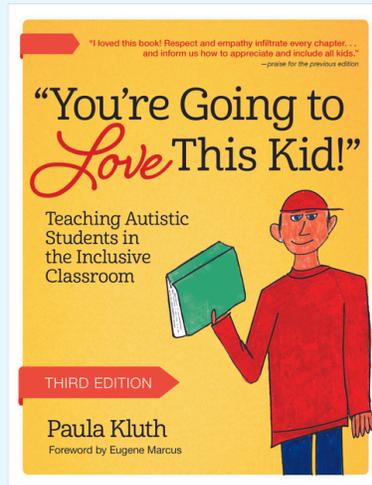
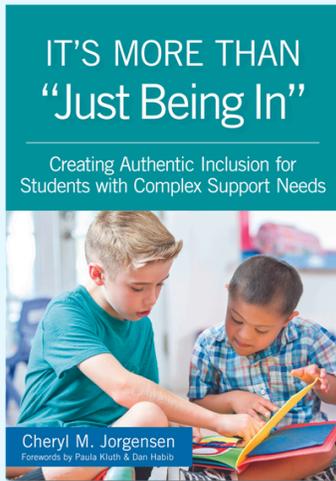
Learn a seven-step process for leading inclusive school reform.

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LEARN MORE IN THESE BOOKS

Get these books for more guidance on critical topics in inclusive and special education.



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Using adaptations



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special education titles! →



ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Nicole Eredics, author of [Inclusion in Action](#)



Can you clarify the difference between the two types of adaptations: accommodations and modifications?

Accommodations are adaptations that make curriculum *accessible*. They provide students with an equal opportunity to learn from the same material as their peers. Accommodations do not change learning outcomes—rather, they change the way students access learning. For example, a student may understand the content of the lesson but may be easily distracted by movement and noise in the classroom. To help the student remain focused, a teacher can seat the student away from windows, doorways, or gathering areas.

Adaptations in the form of modifications make curriculum *possible*. Modifications change the learning outcomes of a lesson to suit the cognitive ability of the student. For a student who works below grade level, modifications to curriculum give the student an opportunity to learn from and participate in the same curriculum as their peers. Modifications can include providing the student with a simplified version of lesson, expecting the student to master a reduced number of concepts or themes, and/or providing the student with prompts.

It is important to note that a student might also need accommodations to learn modified work, thus making curriculum accessible *and* possible.

5 Types of **INSTRUCTIONAL ADAPTATIONS** for Your Inclusive Classroom

Adapted from [Modifying Schoolwork](#), by Rachel Janney & Martha Snell

Alter the instructional arrangement

01

Groups of the same size don't always work for all students.

Be mindful of and responsive to students with sensory and attention issues.

02

Alter the physical or social environment

Alter your methods and materials

03

Offer learners many different ways to engage with and absorb the content.

Let your students show what they know in a variety of innovative ways.

04

Alter the process or task

Alter the level of personal assistance

05

Enlist helpers such as peers, a special educator, or a paraprofessional.

Best and Worst Modifications

Good modifications help support students with disabilities so they can experience everything the general curriculum has to offer. But bad modifications can do more harm than good. So how do you know the difference? Read this Brookes blog post for expert guidance!

[10 Worst Modifications for Students with Disabilities \(and 100+ Good Ones!\)](#)

Getting Started with Modifications

By Nicole Eredics, author of [Inclusion in Action](#)



Begin with the right mindset and presume competence. By doing so, we are motivated to find ways to make lesson content accessible and achievable. In addition, we do not set boundaries on learning.



Identify and align goals that need to be taught for students with and without disabilities. Look for common themes, content, and learning outcomes within a subject strand. Look to curriculum above and below grade level.



Plan a lesson that will teach both the aligned grade-level and modified goals. Build a lesson that allows for a range of learning, such as differentiated learning activities. If you are using a prescribed lesson, substitutions, additions, and deletions will need to be made. There are 4 key areas in a lesson plan where you can make those adjustments:

- **Content:** Provide content that is related to the grade-level curriculum but is at a level more appropriate for student with disabilities.
- **Instructional Method:** Provide an alternate and better-suited form of instruction. A student on an IEP can create an art project related to a novel that the class reading.
- **Conceptual Difficulty:** Change the difficulty of the lesson (e.g., provide answer prompts or an answer bank to use for an assignment).
- **Educational Goals:** Target educational goals that are appropriate and achievable.



Use high-leverage instructional strategies to engage students in learning. Don't rely on a few basic techniques such as yes/no questions. Refer to Robert Marzano's Taxonomy, which provides an extensive list of activity stems to encourage various levels of thinking skills.

15 Ideas for Accommodations

Adapted from The Speech-Language Pathologist's Handbook for Inclusive School Practices by Julie Causton and Chelsea P. Tracy-Bronson



- Give a signal to start listening
- Use an object to signify who is speaking
- Provide lecture notes enhanced with visuals
- Build in time for movement breaks
- Highlight the most important information on direction sheets
- Provide a handout or a simple chart of key points to remember

- Create a lecture outline the student can complete during the lecture
- Offer a double-spaced test
- Have someone read the test questions
- For matching tests, divide a long column into smaller sections
- Offer pencil grips and raised-line paper for motor skill support
- Supply students with sticky notes to write questions on



- Allow students to hold or manipulate a focus object
- Offer an audio version of the text
- Give students choices about how to participate in the class discussion

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Nicole Eredics, author of [Inclusion in Action](#)



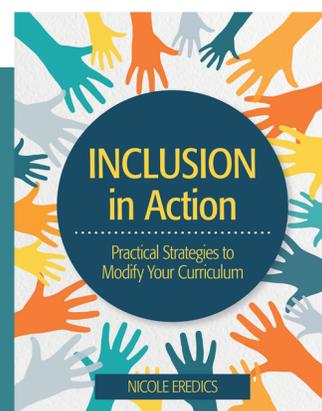
How can a teacher tell when a student needs an accommodation vs. a modification?

Teachers track student progress through ongoing observation and assessment. Sometimes a teacher will notice that a student is struggling to see the learning material, hear a lesson, or understand a concept. When a teacher notices that a student is continuously struggling to access and/or learn lesson content, the teacher will **alert the learning specialists** in the school.

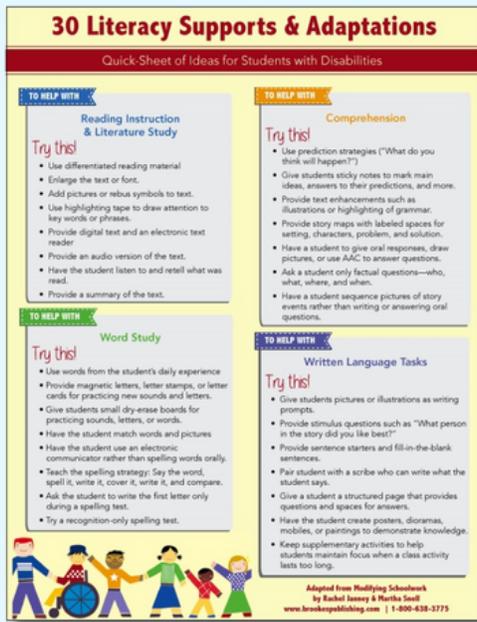
Together, the teacher and learning specialists will use their expertise to **investigate potential barriers to learning** through informal and formal evaluations. The decision to provide students with accommodations and/or modifications is based on the **results of the evaluations** as well as the **consensus of the school and the student's family**.

READ MORE IN THE BOOK:

Get 40 specific, teacher-tested strategies to modify your curriculum for students who work below grade level. bpub.fyi/NE



FREE RESOURCES!



Literacy Supports & Adaptations Tip Sheet

Download a sheet of 30 easy, ready-to-use tips for modifying reading and writing classwork for students with a wide range of disabilities and learning needs. A great reference to have on hand for quick ideas!

GET IT NOW

Nicole Eredics Webinar

Watch a free webinar with inclusion expert Nicole Eredics! Learn how to make curriculum modifications for student with disabilities that are inclusive and are aligned with grade level content.

WATCH IT



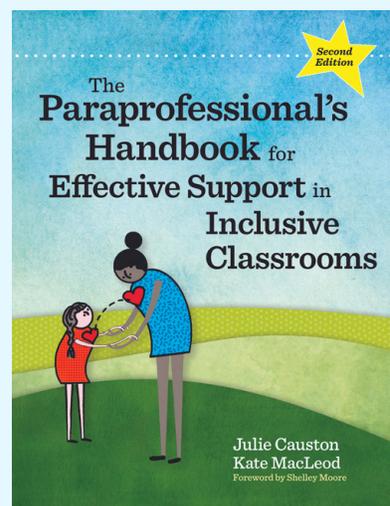
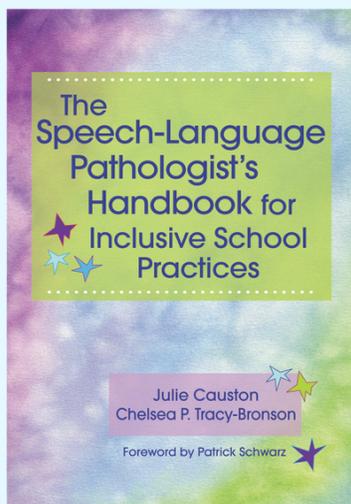
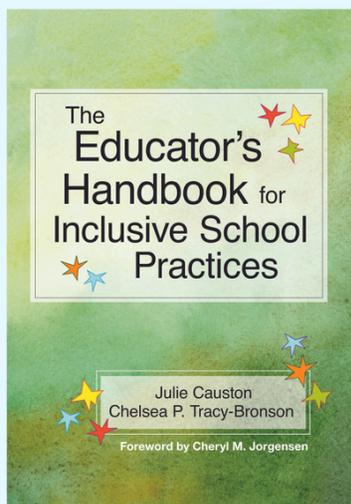
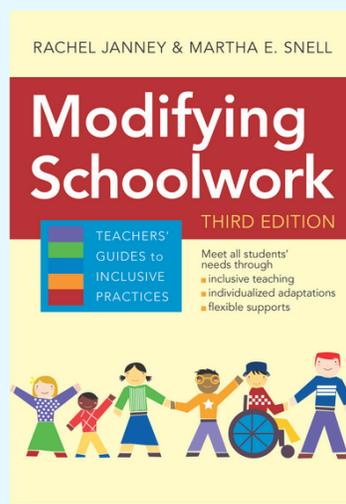
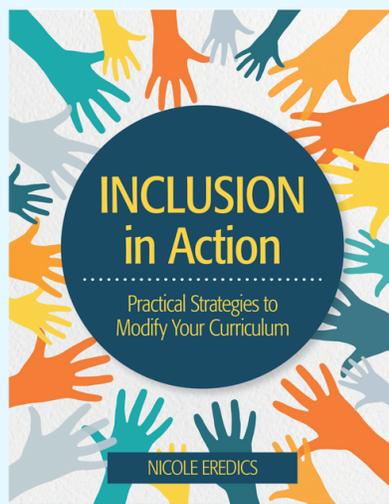
Making Curriculum Modifications in Minutes



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Get these books for more guidance on adaptations and other critical topics in inclusive and special education.



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Teaching students on the autism spectrum



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3 Ways to Maximize Learning Spaces for Autistic Students

Adapted from *You're Going to Love This Kid!, Third Edition*, by Paula Kluth

1

Designate Low-Congestion Areas

An autistic student may become frustrated if classmates are constantly walking past their desk or in front of the whiteboard they are trying to read. When possible, the pencil sharpener, classroom library, and supply cabinet should be kept in places least likely to interfere with the functioning of the class or at least away from the students who are the most easily distracted. In the same spirit, a learner with these needs might be seated in a low-congestion area where individuals are discouraged from congregating.

2

Designate Quiet Study Areas

Students with autism often need time away from the noise and chaos of the classroom. Teachers in crowded schools might work with the school librarian to create a quiet study space in that room, or work space might be set up in the hallway (depending on fire codes) for any student who needs a break from a busy classroom. Consider ways to allow any student to use this option at times.

3

Designate Active Learning Areas

Although many students have the need for quiet, others need movement, activity, and interaction. A student who cannot sit at a desk or keep a low voice in a classroom can still participate by working on course material in a different part of the room or in a different environment with a few classmates.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Paula Kluth in [You're Going to Love This Kid!, Third Edition](#)



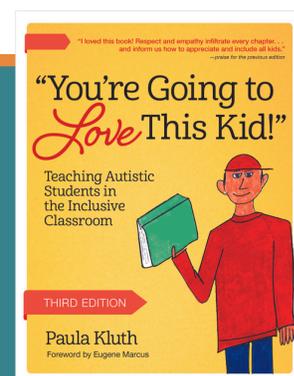
Q. How can I incorporate more visual supports for autistic students into my classroom?

Visuals can make language more accessible for those who struggle to comprehend spoken words, especially when information is provided too quickly or is overwhelming in other ways. **Diagrams, schedules, pictures, photographs, labels, words, objects, and models** are just some of the types of visuals that may be helpful to autistic students.

To provide an effective visual, begin by **determining a purpose**: Is your goal to aid comprehension? Provide comfort? Support literacy goals? Then, **choose what type of visual will work best**. Do you need just a line drawing, or will a photograph be necessary? Will the photo be sufficient, or will the child need an object to see or hold? After you determine this, you can **decide on where to keep or use the support**. Should the steps for packing up for the day be available in a binder or stuck right to the locker door? Should a picture schedule be at a learner's desk or near the whiteboard adjacent to the classroom command center? The answers to these questions will depend on your student's preferences, needs, and abilities.

READ MORE IN THE BOOK

The ultimate guide to supporting autistic students and meeting each learner's individual needs. bpub.fyi/Kluth3e

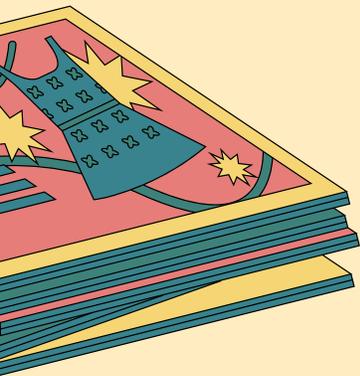
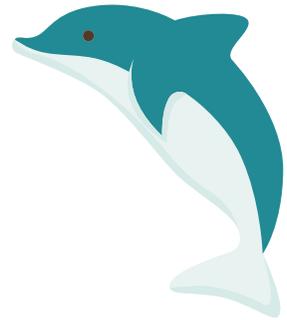


8 Ways to Use Student Fascinations to Support Learning



Adapted from [Just Give Him the Whale!](#) by Paula Kluth

Search the curriculum for natural areas to teach about the student's favorites. If the student loves vacuum cleaners, this topic can be featured in a unit on inventions. If the student adores dolphins, you can discuss them during lessons on habitats or ocean life.



Find a range of reading materials related to the student's fascination. Include nonfiction, fiction, poetry, catalogs, and anything else that might pique the learner's interest. Some learners will be highly motivated to read materials most of us do not find interesting or meaningful, such as owner's manuals, cereal boxes, or junk mail flyers.

Try an Internet search of words related to your student's interest area and terms such as *lesson plans*. You will find lessons related to telephones, dinosaurs, Ferris wheels, Native Americans, and just about any other passion or interest you can imagine.



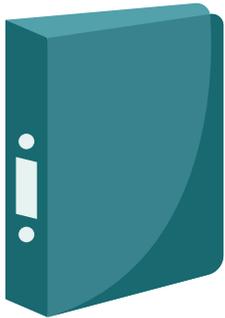
Ask a student to write about their interest so that others may learn about it. Some students may be able to write a children's book, poem, technical manual, or comic book about their special area.



8 Ways to Use Student Fascinations to Support Learning



Adapted from [Just Give Him the Whale!](#) by Paula Kluth



Allow students to conduct ongoing projects of their favorite people, topics, or things. Encourage learners to keep a portfolio, binder, or crate in the classroom that houses all of their products, artifacts, and materials. When opportunities for new projects arise, a student can be encouraged to examine a new question related to the area of fascination.

Have students keep a running list of questions related to their passion area. You might ask learners to generate “big” questions that can lead them to study their passions in real-world or authentic ways.



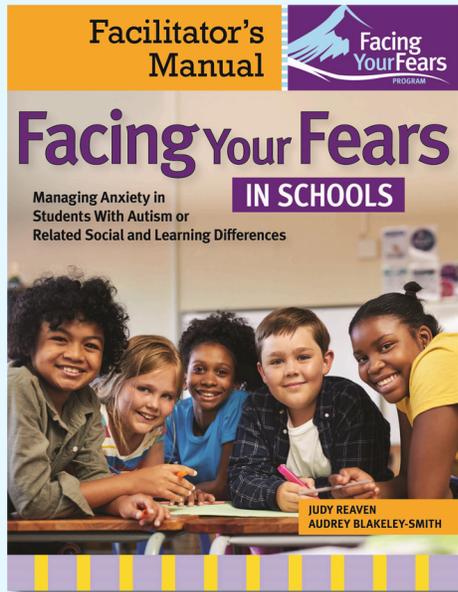
Change up instruction to meet the needs of students with specific areas of expertise. Can you comically imitate a favorite person when trying to emphasize a point? Can you use student interests in your class discussions (“A car and a CRH 5 bullet train started from the two different towns at the same time...”)?

Encourage autistic students to learn from and about other successful adults who turned their passion into personal or professional success. In addition to studying individuals who have found career success, students can investigate those who became successful by creating something, making a contribution to the community or the world, becoming a leader, or inspiring others.



Essential Resources

for Supporting Students on the Autism Spectrum



Facing Your Fears in Schools

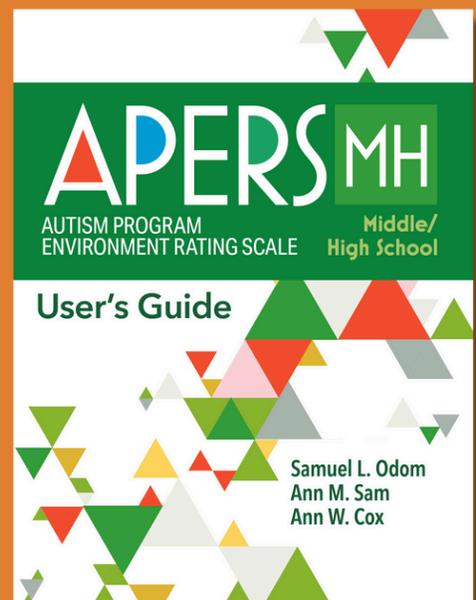
Help autistic students face and manage their fears and anxiety triggers—and overcome a major obstacle to school success—with this highly effective cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) program designed for use with students ages 8–14.

EXPLORE IT

Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS)

How well does your school support learning, development, and participation for students on the autism spectrum? Find out with APERS–MH, an assessment that evaluates the quality of educational programs for autistic middle and high school students.

EXPLORE IT



5 Ways to Support Learning for Autistic Students

Adapted from [Behavior Support for Students with ASD](#) by Debra Leach



Use concrete examples. Try using manipulatives and models, and connect abstract concepts to things that are familiar to the student. For example, if you're talking about conduction, you might bring in a pan and talk about what would happen if you touch the pan when it is hot.



Adjust the learning environment. You may want to modify lighting, remove excess clutter, provide clearly defined work spaces, and create a safe space or "cool down area" students can use if emotionally distressed.



Follow the student's lead. Initiate engagement with something your student is focused on to establish joint attention and reciprocal exchanges. You can also follow the student's lead by positively responding to comments the student makes and questions they ask during group instruction, even if they seem off topic.



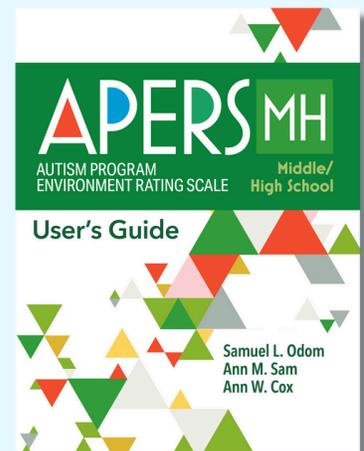
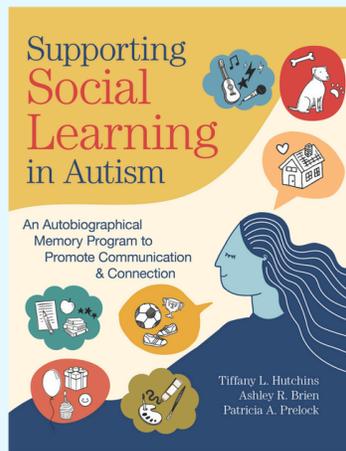
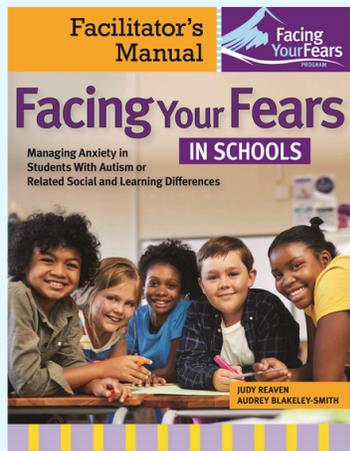
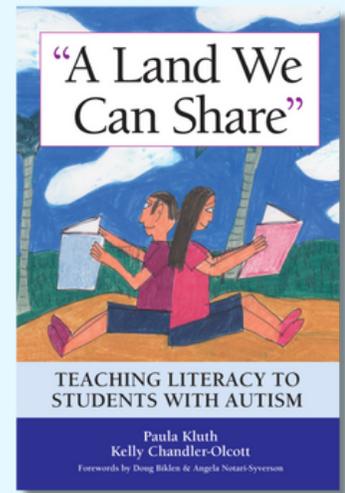
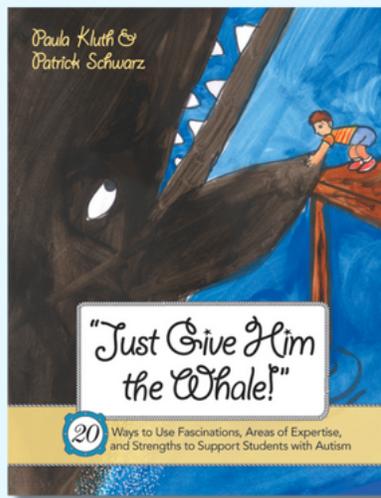
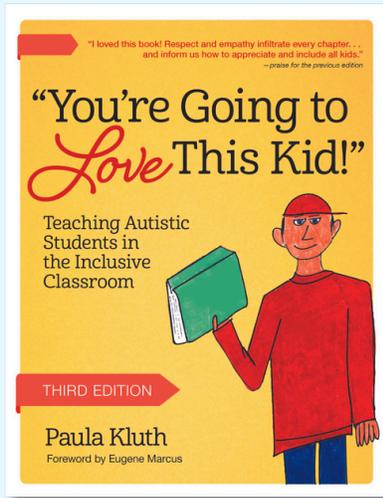
Preteach skills and concepts in small-group or one-to-one contexts before a whole-group lesson. Then when the actual lesson takes place, the student will already have a basic understanding of the lesson format and content, which may reduce frustration and challenging behaviors.



Increase choices to increase motivation. Provide as many opportunities as possible for students to make choices throughout the day. For example, allow them to choose study topics, materials, or ways to learn new material; select partners for group activities; or decide how to demonstrate their learning.

LEARN MORE IN THESE BOOKS

Get these resources for more on teaching autistic students and other critical topics in inclusive and special education.



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Supporting executive function skills



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ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Monica Adler Werner, co-developer of Unstuck and On Target!



For teachers who might have limited experience recognizing executive function issues—what might they look like in a classroom?

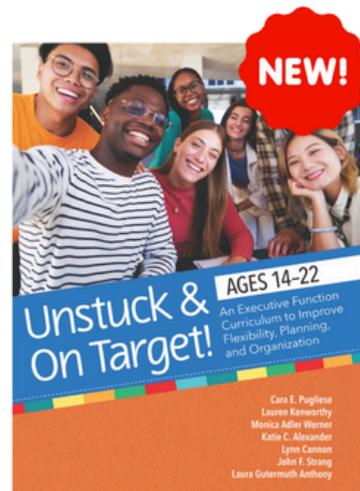
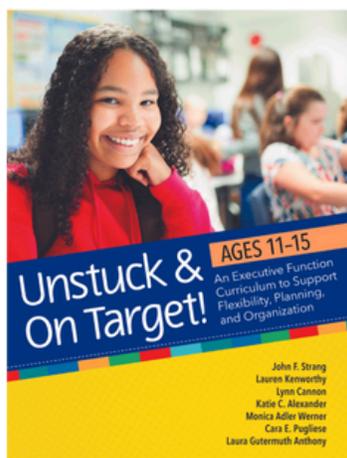
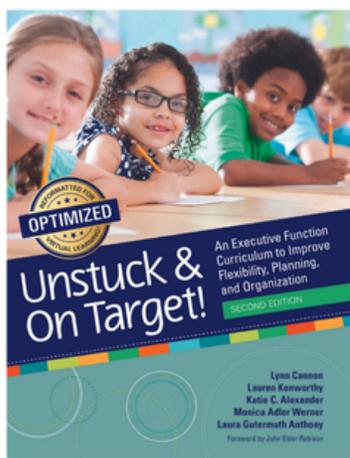
Some students are often called inattentive, inconsiderate, disorganized, and unmotivated. They are the students who are really smart but just “seem like they won’t do anything they don’t like.” We hear a lot of “**won’ts**” and “**should be able tos**” about these students. We also hear a lot about students who are really **rigid** or “**stuck**.” Once they get an idea, **they won’t flex**, and they will persist down their path heedless of the consequences.

Students may be having **meltdowns, disrupting class, refusing to do work, or rushing through the work**. Others may be **quietly withdrawn** and doing the bare minimum. They are often highly verbal and intellectually engaged, and can tell you all the right things to do. But when they have to do those same things, they don’t. That’s a hallmark of executive function difficulties.

Teachers are often very frustrated because they have tried countless approaches, taught and retaught, called parents, and yet there’s still no progress. And that’s how **Unstuck and On Target!** started, with teachers and psychologists working together to try a different approach, one that was brain based, student centered, and teacher friendly.

How to Get Your Students *Unstuck and On Target!*

Strengthening students' executive function skills (including **flexibility, emotional regulation, persistence, and strong organizational skills**) is one of the most important things teachers can do to help students succeed. Developed to strengthen executive function skills in school settings, the proven **Unstuck and On Target!** curriculum can help.



Three age ranges: 8–11, 11–15, and 14–22

Unstuck is for anyone struggling with executive functions, including **students who are on the autism spectrum or have ADHD**. Through catchy scripts, visuals, role-plays, and positive reinforcement, the small-group lessons keep students engaged as they learn important skills. Lessons build on each other, and students get lots of opportunities to practice and generalize their new skills to school, home, and community.



Scan the code for a **free sample lesson!**



Top 5 Benefits of Using Unstuck and On Target!



Unstuck dismantles obstacles to long-term success. Problems with flexibility and goal-directed behavior can be a major obstacle to success in school and in life. Unstuck directly addresses executive functioning at school, so kids can be more flexible, well-regulated problem-solvers in the classroom and beyond.



Unstuck really works. The authors tested Unstuck in Title I elementary schools with racially, ethnically, and language diverse families and compared it to a behavior management program (Contingency Behavior Management, or CBM). They found that students and parents liked Unstuck more than CBM, and Unstuck's improvements were maintained one year later!



It's easy and flexible. Unstuck can be implemented in a variety of settings, uses items teachers likely have in their classrooms already, includes visual supports and posters, and offers simple classroom and home practice guides to make each lesson easy to implement for busy teachers.



The benefits are well worth the initial time investment. With its solid research base and proven impact on students, Unstuck's benefits will continue far beyond the brief lessons.



Unstuck gets parents involved. Unstuck keeps the home-school connection strong with "home extensions" that summarize what the student learned and how the parents can use the ideas at home. This leads to more positive interactions between parents and children—and better outcomes for the kids.

12

WAYS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS' EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Adapted from Essential Skills for Struggling Learners,
by von Hahn, Horowitz, & Linse

APPROACH
STUDENTS WITH
EMPATHY

MAKE GOALS
CLEAR &
SPECIFIC

PROVIDE A
WELL-DEFINED
PLAN

USE VISUAL
REMINDERS

START TASKS
WITH A SIGNAL

MAKE STRATEGIC
MODIFICATIONS

PREPARE THEM
FOR CHANGE

GIVE GENTLE
REMINDERS

SCHEDULE TIME
FOR FEEDBACK

USE MISTAKES
TO LEARN

FOCUS ON
SMALL STEPS OF
PROGRESS

CELEBRATE
SUCCESSSES

WATCH A WEBINAR

View a recording of a helpful webinar on Executive Skills and ADHD, presented by Erik von Hahn, M.D., coauthor of Essential Skills for Struggling Learners.

WATCH NOW

4 Study Strategies for Students Who Struggle with Executive Function



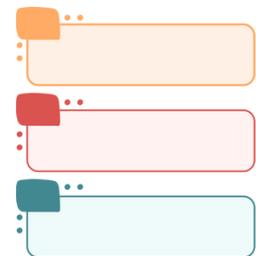
Adapted from the chapter “The Role of Executive Function in Literacy Instruction” by Monica Gordon-Pershey, in Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills, Fourth Edition, edited by Judith R. Birsh & Suzanne Carreker.

Have dedicated study times and places. Give students specific periods of time for studying when they are not fatigued, distracted, or hurried. They also need a place to study that is quiet and free of distractions. For some students, a headset that plays a recording of nature sounds or non-distracting music may help them focus and screen out noise.



Teach study skills explicitly. Some study skills are generalizable across different academic subjects. Explicitly teach study skills such as “read all directions before beginning an assignment,” “highlight key words,” “highlight topic sentences,” “make a list of questions you have,” “make up some quiz questions for yourself,” and “create mnemonic devices.”

Teach learning strategies. Learning strategies are similar to study skills, but they may point more directly toward a systematized way to learn certain concepts. “Make up quiz questions for yourself” as a study skill becomes a learning strategy when the quiz questions ask, for example, for strategic learning by enumeration (“There are four causes for...”).



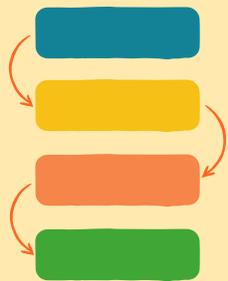
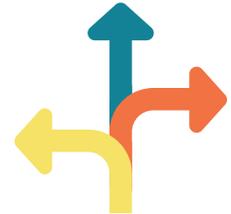
Position yourself as a partner in learning. For example, an adult can model cognitive flexibility, share a task with the students, cue the student to stimulate inhibitory control (“Try closing your laptop while we discuss what we’ve read.”), help only when help is needed, or ask a reflective question such as “Why do you need help now?”

4 Time Management Tips for Students Who Struggle with Executive Function



Adapted from [Executive Function in the Classroom](#) by Christopher Kaufman

Limit or carefully structure topic choices. When kids with executive function challenges are faced with endless possibilities, they can easily get stuck on a decision. Give them three topic choices for a project, or carefully support them during the selection process so they don't get bogged down.



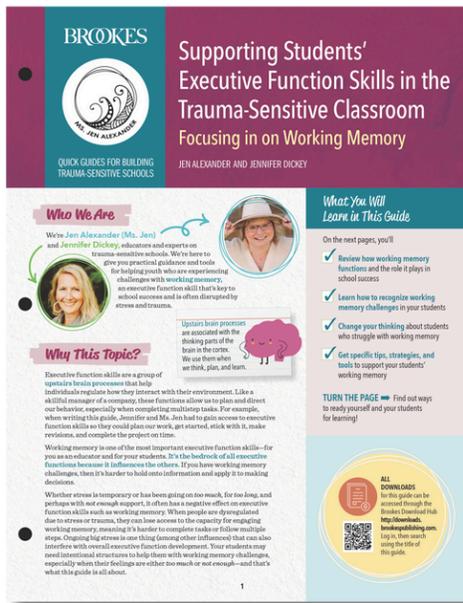
Turn mountains into a series of molehills. For students with executive function challenges, a multi-step project might seem like a towering mountain. You can help by structuring a larger assignment as a series of "molehills," small elements that are each do-able on their own. As students check off small tasks they complete, they'll build a sense of mastery and optimism.

Be specific about project steps and deadlines. Often, students with executive function challenges have difficulty sensing the passing of time and ballparking how long a project will take. Vague reminders about deadlines don't do much to help them. Instead, try giving very specific instructions linked to specific steps and deadlines.



Provide individualized project coaching. While it's important to foster independence, you can't insist students with executive function challenges manage a long-term project with many task demands while receiving the same level of support as their peers. They'll need coaching and check-ins from you and their parents along the way. You might also try creating a project planning form to ensure that every student is making good progress toward completing long-term projects.

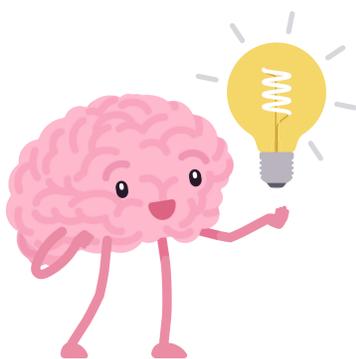
Trauma & Executive Function



Supporting Students' Executive Function Skills in the Trauma-Sensitive Classroom: Focusing in on Working Memory

A laminated quick-guide from Jen Alexander, M.A., NCC, SB-RPT, and Jennifer Dickey, M.A., educators and experts on trauma-sensitive schools.

Students who experience trauma may have ongoing difficulties with executive function skills—including **working memory**, a skill that's foundational to attention, focus, and school success. Part of a series of **laminated quick guides** for preK–12 educators, this is your **concise, practical introduction** to supporting students who struggle with working memory.



- Review how working memory functions
- Learn how to recognize working memory challenges in your students
- Adjust the way you think about and talk to students who struggle with working memory
- Get specific tips, strategies, and tools to support your students' working memory (10 interactive downloads are included!)

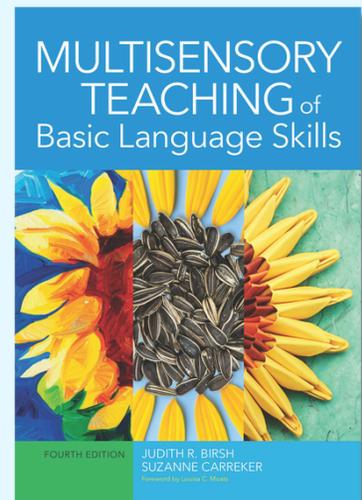
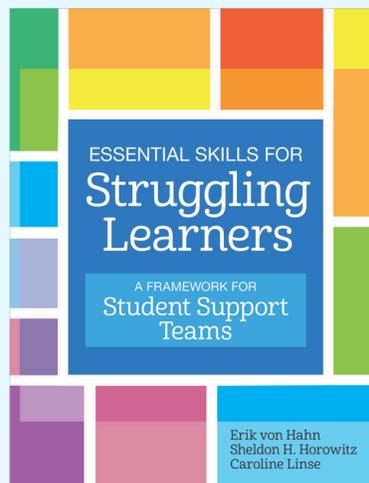
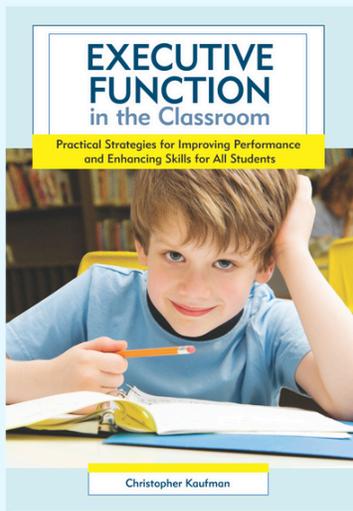
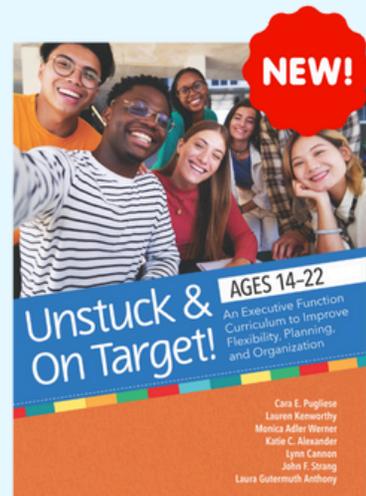
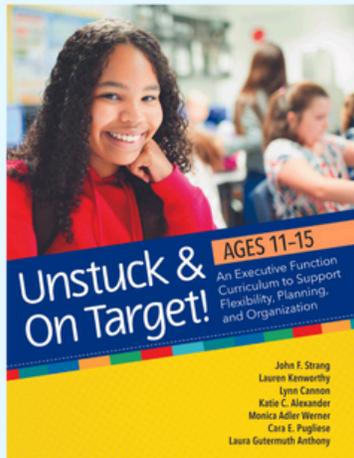
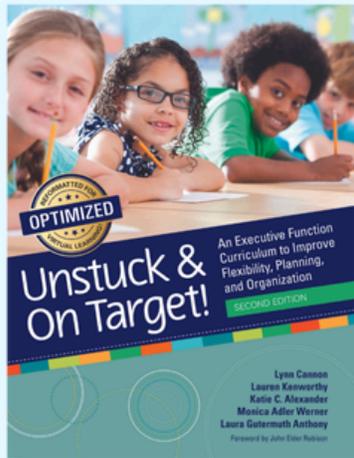
ORDER THIS GUIDE

and explore the other quick-guides in the series from Jen Alexander and her expert collaborators!

SEE THE GUIDES

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Get these books for more guidance on executive function and other critical topics in inclusive and special education.



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Getting started with UDL



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What Is Universal Design for Learning?

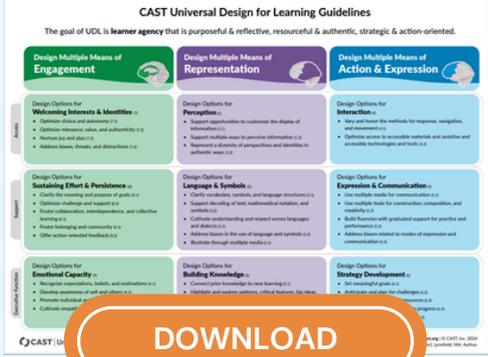
Nearly 30 years ago, CAST—a nonprofit education research organization—based UDL on insights from neuroscience and learning science research. CAST founders conceptualized UDL as a framework with three principles associated with three sets of brain networks:

-  **Engagement:** Provide multiple means of engagement to incite the affective networks, which attend to and monitor the environment, control physiological responses, and regulate emotions and behavior (linked to the why of learning).
-  **Representation:** Provide multiple means of representation to stimulate the recognition networks, which perceive stimuli in the environment, assign meaning to information, build language, and internalize knowledge (linked to the what of learning).
-  **Action and expression:** Provide multiple means of action and expression to activate the strategic networks, which initiate and coordinate purposeful actions, guide planning, and organize expression (linked to the how of learning).

Adapted from *True Inclusion with UDL* by Patti Kelly Ralabate; includes information from Meyer, A., Rose, D. H., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and practice*. CAST Professional Publishing.

CAST UDL Guidelines

Download the latest edition of the The UDL Guidelines from CAST: “a living, dynamic tool that is continuously developed based on new research and feedback from practitioners.”



The graphic displays the CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines. At the top, it states: "The goal of UDL is learner agency that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented." Below this, the guidelines are organized into a grid with three main columns: Engagement, Representation, and Action & Expression. Each column has three rows of specific design options. A large orange button with the word "DOWNLOAD" is positioned at the bottom right of the graphic.

	Engagement	Representation	Action & Expression
Engage	Design Multiple Means of Engaging Interests & Identities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Optimize choice and autonomyOptimize relevance, value, and authenticityMaximize self-efficacyAddress biases, threats, and stereotypes	Design Multiple Means of Perception <ul style="list-style-type: none">Support opportunities to customize the display of informationSupport multiple ways to perceive informationAssessments: diversity of perspectives and identities in all levels, axes	Design Multiple Means of Action & Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none">View and foster the methods for response, navigation, and assessmentOptimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools
Support	Design Options for Sustaining Effort & Persistence <ul style="list-style-type: none">Clarify the meaning and purpose of goalsOptimize challenge and supportFoster collaboration, interdependence, and collective learningFoster belonging and communityOffer action-oriented feedback	Design Options for Language & Symbols <ul style="list-style-type: none">Clarify vocabulary, syntax, and language structuresSupport decoding of text, mathematical notations, and symbolsClarify understanding and impact across languages and dialectsAddress barriers to the use of language and symbolsIllustrate through multiple media	Design Options for Expression & Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use multiple media for communicationUse multiple tools for construction, composition, and creationBuild resources with granular support for practice and performanceAddress barriers related to modes of expression and communication
Empower	Design Options for Emotional Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognize emotional, social, and motivationalDevelop awareness of self and othersProvide individualized supportCultivate growth mindsets	Design Options for Building Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">Customize knowledge to the learnerIncorporate and promote positive, critical factors in the learning process	Design Options for Strategy Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">Set meaningful goalsAnticipate and plan for challengesEngage in self-reflection and peer review

[DOWNLOAD](#)

4 Big Things to Know About UDL

From [Design and Deliver](#) by Loui Lord Nelson

1

It's best to begin slowly.

Find one thing that feels right to try and go with that first!

2

It's a continual process.

Enter your experience with UDL knowing you'll always be learning more.

3

It's for all learners.

Every learner should make choices and investigate their own learning needs.

4

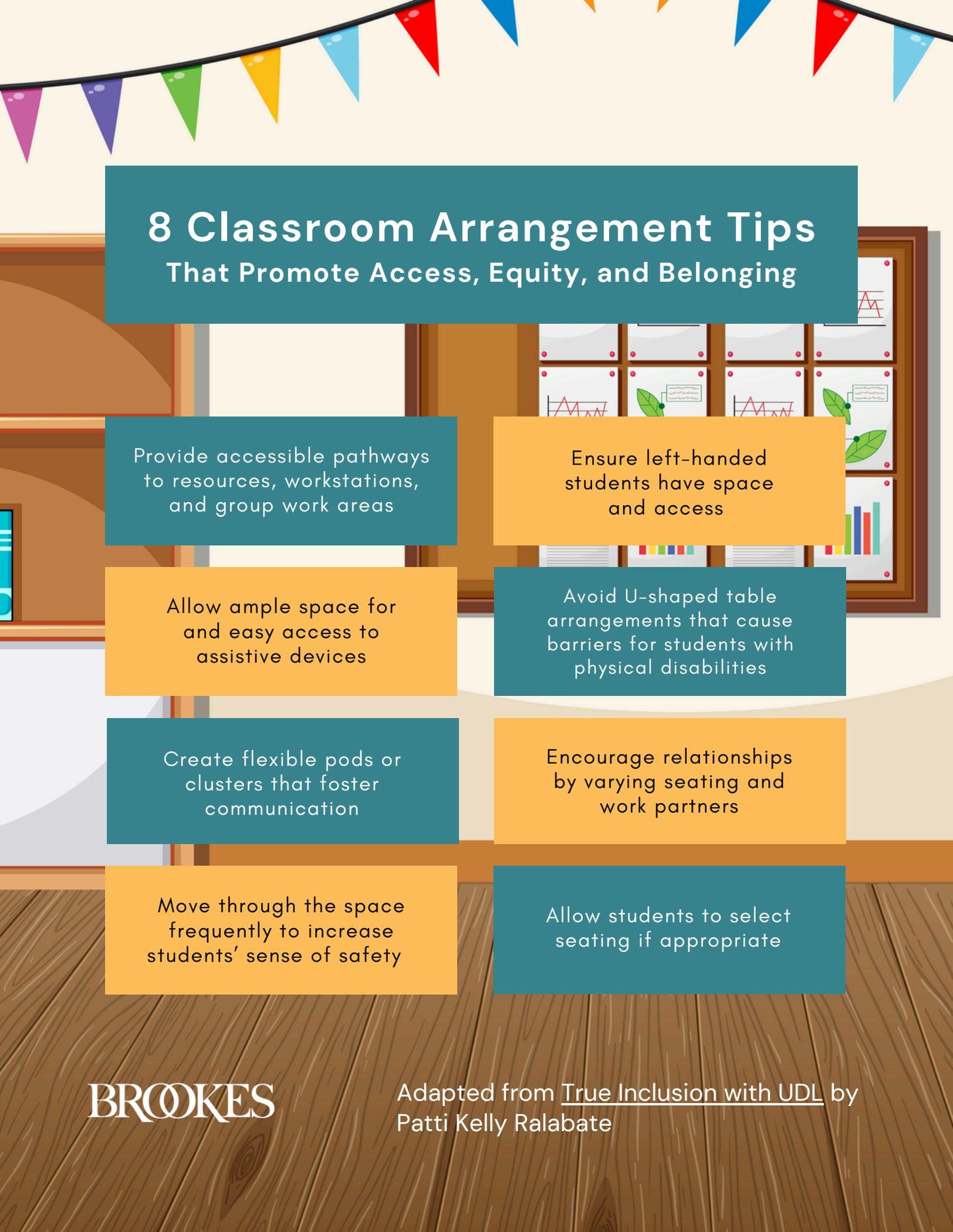
It can be used for all subjects.

UDL is not subject dependent; it can be applied with any academic subject.

6 Steps to Planning UDL Lessons

Adapted from *Your UDL Lesson Planner*, by Patti Kelly Ralabate

-  **Define flexible, clear SMART goals.** Ask yourself, “What is the goal of this lesson?” (The CCSS or your state standards will often serve as the base for your goal.) Effective learning goals are SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time bound.
-  **Consider learner variability.** Assess the readiness levels, skills, and needs of learners and the challenges of the learning environment. Anticipate learning gaps and barriers that may distract, frustrate, or confuse learners. Apply UDL guidelines to plan for learner variability and determine what scaffolds are needed.
-  **Determine appropriate assessments.** Choose assessments that provide meaningful information, are flexible, and assess individual student growth. Find out what assessment accommodations are listed in students’ IEP or 504 plans and provide these.
-  **Select methods, materials, and media.** Consider the types of assistance to include in order to address learner variability: Scaffolds? Supports? Accommodations and modifications? Offer flexibility and relevance and balance assistance with challenge.
-  **Teach and assess learning.** Put it all together and deliver your UDL lesson. Assess student learning with flexible, informative assessments matched to your learning goal.
-  **Refine educator learning through self-reflection.** Review the data you collected through your assessments and think about your observations. Did your students achieve the learning goal? What worked well? What will you do differently next time?



8 Classroom Arrangement Tips That Promote Access, Equity, and Belonging

Provide accessible pathways to resources, workstations, and group work areas

Ensure left-handed students have space and access

Allow ample space for and easy access to assistive devices

Avoid U-shaped table arrangements that cause barriers for students with physical disabilities

Create flexible pods or clusters that foster communication

Encourage relationships by varying seating and work partners

Move through the space frequently to increase students' sense of safety

Allow students to select seating if appropriate

7 Ways to Infuse UDL into Q&A Sessions with Students

Adapted from [Your UDL Lesson Planner](#), by Patti Kelly Ralabate

-  Use **multiple ways to display models** of the types of questions that students can ask you or each other. Communicate these models on the whiteboard, an easy-to-read wall chart, and placards at each group's table.
-  After you **provide students with content in a variety of ways** (e.g., text, video, narrated slides, topical blogs), hold an **"interrogation" session**, when students can ask questions on the topic.
-  To **foster collaboration and community**, have groups of students develop the interrogation questions.
-  To optimize challenge, have a **Question Lottery** using "call sticks" to determine when each group will ask questions.
-  **Promote high expectations** to optimize motivation by assigning a question type to a group. **Optimize choice and autonomy** by letting students choose their own question types.
-  Encourage learner groups to **use multiple tools to display their questions**—prompt cards, slides, or online tools.
-  To build comprehension and maximize transfer, **have each student take a turn at notetaking for the rest of the class**. The notes can be shared via a class wiki or through printed copies.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Answered by Loui Lord Nelson, author of [Design and Deliver, Second Edition](#)



Q. Say a busy teacher loves the idea of UDL but is intimidated by the time investment involved. What advice would you give so that teacher can support every learner without burning out?

We all love saving time. Using past lesson plans. Sharing resources. Leaving a professional development with ideas or tools we can use the next day. We each have our own ways of saving time.

My way is to **start small**: (1) Focus on one guideline or checkpoint, (2) use that to make a change to your learning environment, and (3) sustain that change until it becomes a natural part of your practice. That way, there's no extreme investment of mental-energy or physical time.

WATCH THE WEBINAR

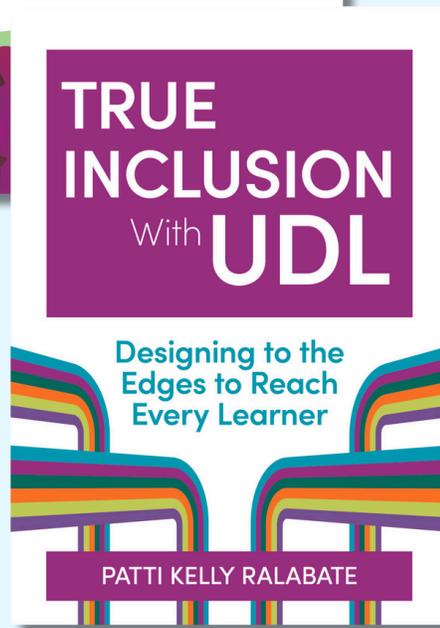
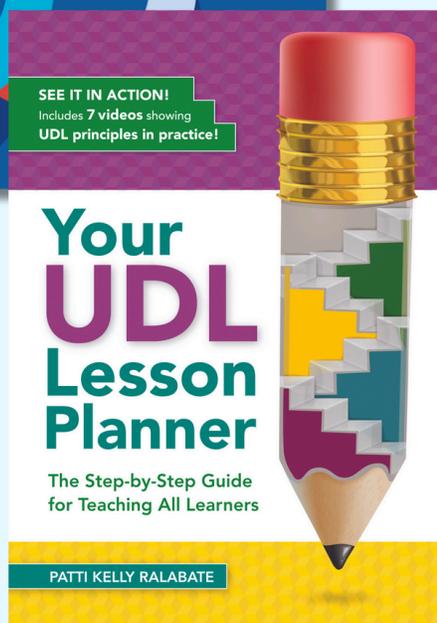
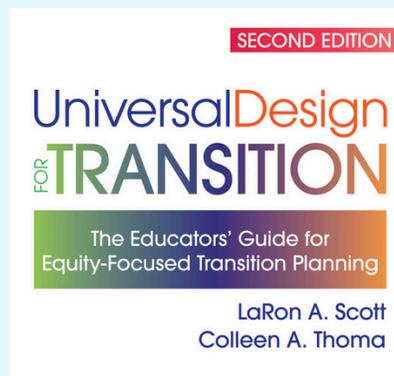
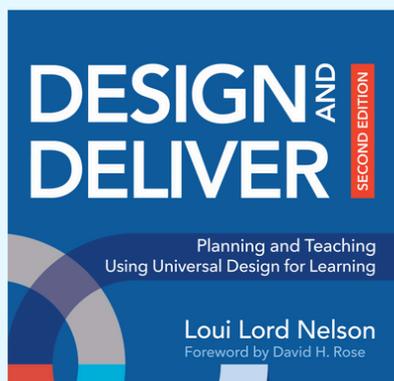
Watch Loui Lord Nelson's edWebinar on [Getting to Know UDL: A Starter Kit of Ideas](#).

WATCH IT



LEARN MORE IN THESE BOOKS

Get these books for more guidance on UDL and other critical topics in inclusive and special education.



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Making the most of co-teaching



Explore our complete collection of special education titles! →



11 Things Great Co-Teachers Do



Adapted from [The Educator's Handbook for Inclusive School Practices](#) by Julie Causton



Say it proud. Make sure both names are on the door and classroom website.



Communicate collectively. Refer to the classroom as both of yours and talk about your shared space and joint teaching duties with students, families, and colleagues. Newsletters, letters, and notes are sent jointly, signed by both teachers.



Switch it up. Rotate co-teaching arrangements, and often. Switch on and off, leading lessons and supporting. Rotate who begins lessons, and work with all students, not with the same small group of students daily.



Get the message out. Let the office know that any announcements should be addressed to both of the teachers, using both of their names. The message of joint teaching and of inclusive co-teachers is infused throughout the school.



Schedule conferences for times that both teachers can be available. Understand the importance of demonstrating that a team of educators is working with individual students.





-  **Take turns leading the class** to the next activity with transitions. Walk students to schoolwide events or to other classes together.
-  **Share any teacher space**, including the classroom, desks, or tables. Both teachers should have access to all classroom supplies and both should be invested in the organization of the classroom.
-  **Check your language.** Use the phrases our classroom, we created, and ours instead of my classroom, my class, and mine. There should be a sense of shared ownership, responsibility, and accountability.
-  **Do the behind-the-scenes work together.** Both teachers should plan, design, and work on lesson plans. Work together to universally design lesson plans from the beginning, and they both create accommodations, modifications, and differentiation.
-  **Rotate and share** in assessments and student conferences. Assessment data are easy to talk about when both educators teach, work with, and assess each learner.
-  **Collaborate to the fullest extent.** Problem-solve, critically reflect, and make changes to your classroom on an ongoing basis as a way to continually improve skills, meet students' needs, and provide the best inclusive education you can create for your students!

8

PLANNING TIPS FOR CO-TEACHERS

Adapted from [How to Co-Teach](#) by Elizabeth Potts and Lori Howard

Determine classroom logistics, rules, and routines early on

Brush up on standards prior to planning meetings

Find pockets of time for virtual or in-person co-planning

Practice your active listening skills

Have a code word or signal for defusing tension

Discuss use of new communication technology together

Prepare a folder and general lesson agenda for substitute co-teachers

Involve students in assessment of your co-teaching

DOWNLOAD TIP SHEETS

Access four helpful tip sheets on co-teaching adapted from the book [How to Co-Teach!](#)

[GET TIPS](#)

3

Things Co-Teachers Should Do in Every Co-Planning Session

Here's an easy way to remember the guiding principles of every planning session with your fellow co-teacher!



PLAN TO PLAN. Decide on a time and place to plan together. Have a backup if something comes up.

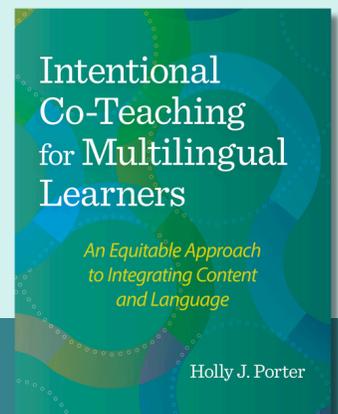


USE A PLAN. Choose a planning template that works for both of you and use it to plan together.



CHECK YOUR PLAN. Use a checklist. Did you cover everything you wanted to cover?

Adapted from [Intentional Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners](#) by Holly J. Porter, your guide to using co-teaching to strengthen success for multilingual learners.



8 Questions About Communication for Co-Teachers to Discuss

Adapted from [How to Co-Teach](#) by Elizabeth Potts and Lori Howard

- What will our regular schedule for detailed planning or discussions be?
- How is it best to get last-minute information to each other?
- Can we communicate with each other via email? Text? Telephone calls at home?
- How will we interact with parents? As a team? Separately? As requests come in?

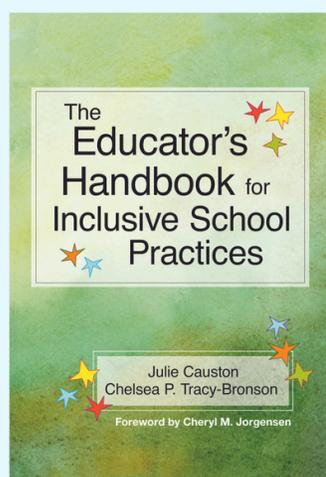
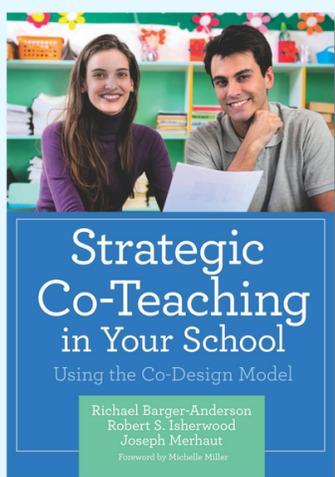
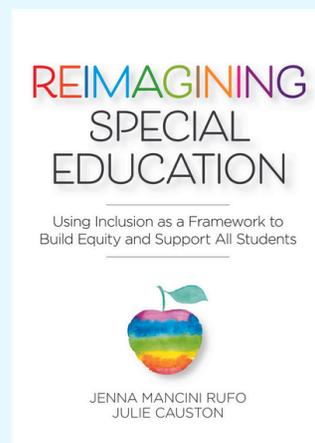
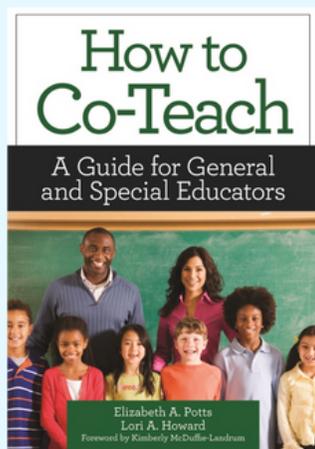
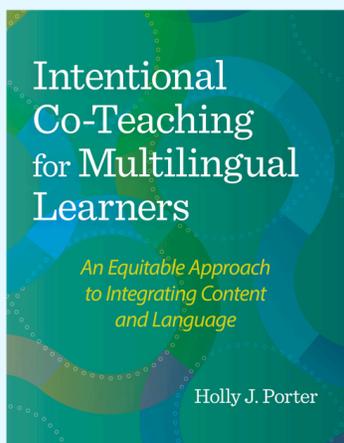


- How will we deal with and communicate issues (e.g., students who are not performing well or need extra help)?
- How will we avoid students asking one of us a question, then going to the other if they don't like the first answer?
- On what kinds of decisions should we always consult each other?
- What kinds of things should we each handle independently?



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