


Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs:

**Cultivating High Quality Teaching
and Learning Aligned to Louisiana's
Vision for Success**



JUNE 2022

Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs

All students deserve equitable access to high quality instruction. Yet, school systems often face unique and complex challenges in improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Addressing these challenges is multifaceted and requires strong leaders who can effectively coordinate programming within and across departments and schools to increase equitable access to inclusive learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

To support the increased effectiveness of special education programming through effective and inclusive system-wide planning, the department will release seven guidance documents to school systems in 2022. The guidance will cover the highest impact areas of special education programming to most effectively improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Each guidance document will be accompanied by an hour long webinar to support implementation.

In partnership with and alongside school and school system leaders, special education leaders are encouraged to review the guidance documents and attend webinars. Please note: release dates and topics are subject to change.

| TOPICS FOR 2021-2022 GUIDANCE FOR LEADING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS | |
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| Month | Topic |
| January | <u>Leveraging Data to Align Budgets and Spending to Priorities</u> |
| February | Creating Compliant Systems for Student Success <u>Webinar: February 22 at 1 pm</u> |
| March | Educator and Staff Well-Being <u>Webinar: April 8</u> |
| April | Student Well-Being and Trauma Informed Supports <u>Webinar: May 3 at 1pm</u> |
| May | Positive Behavior Intervention <u>Webinar: June 7 at 1pm</u> |
| June | Cultivating High Quality Teaching and Learning Aligned to Louisiana's Vision for Success <u>Webinar: July 7 at 1pm</u> |
| July | Identifying, Engaging, and Managing Key Stakeholders |



Cultivating High-Quality Teaching and Learning Aligned to Louisiana’s Vision for Success

Purpose

[Louisiana believes](#) all students can achieve high expectations regardless of their background, family income, or zip code. Further, LDOE’s mission is to ensure that every Louisiana student is on track to a college degree or professional career. In order for students to reach their highest potential, educators and leaders must be committed to providing high-quality teaching and learning to all students. Three best practices that support the fulfillment of this vision are: 1) focusing on **high-quality core instruction**; 2) providing students **extra time to learn**; and 3) building **content-strong educators**. These practices align closely to the [four strategies](#) Louisiana uses to guide our support of students with disabilities, specifically defining the components of the second strategy: High-Quality Instruction.

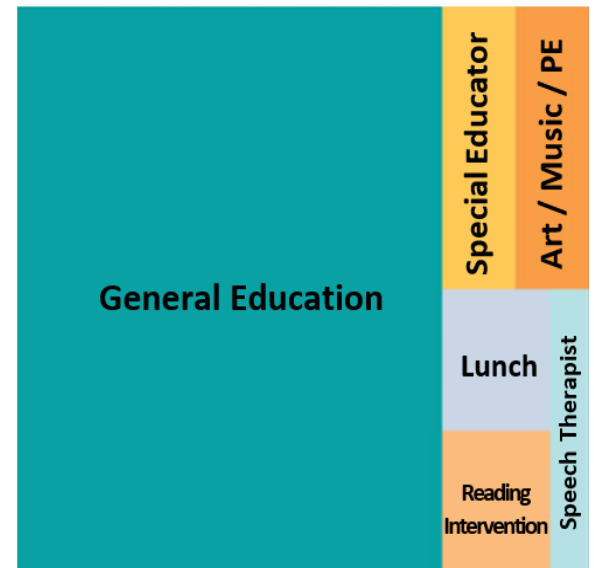


High-Quality Instruction: Educators build a culture in which teachers provide high-quality instruction that meets the needs of every student.

Strategies for Success and Instructional Best Practices

1. What is *high-quality core instruction*? Educators support and encourage students' commitment to initiate and complete complex, inquiry-based learning requiring creative and critical thinking with attention to problem solving. A focus on high-quality core curriculum is the most equitable approach to reach as many students as possible during school hours.
2. What is *extra time to learn*? Research shows that [increasing hours of instruction](#) (either during nonacademic class periods or by extending the official school day) can be an effective way to improve academic performance for all age groups, types of students, and content areas.
3. What are *content-strong educators*? Educators who demonstrate understanding and application of current theories, concepts, and skills in their related subject(s) and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for students are the best people to prepare students for their futures.

Inclusive Core Instruction Matters Most!





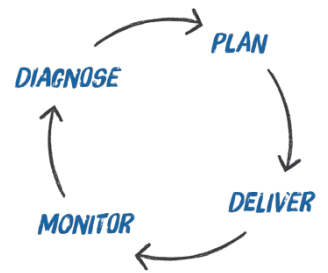
Leveraging Extra Time to Learn: Accelerating Learning and Response to Intervention

Accelerating Learning is the prioritization of **equitable access to high-quality, grade level instruction for ALL students** as the center of the design and implementation of educational supports and services. It is the belief that ALL students are bright and capable learners who are worthy of nothing less than learning grade level content alongside peers in the highest quality teaching and learning environment.

This approach leverages acceleration, a cyclical instructional process that connects unfinished learning in the context of new grade-level learning utilizing [high-quality materials](#) to provide timely, individualized supports throughout a variety of flexible instructional settings and groupings.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is one approach to accelerating learning. Effective RTI includes three essential components that will lead to acceleration:

- Effective, rigorous, high-quality, grade level core instruction
- Scaffolding during core instruction
- Extra-time intervention from content strong teachers



Within the RTI process, educators should use the accelerating learning approach as they provide interventions to increase student success with grade level learning, and both include ongoing progress monitoring and data-driven decisions based on student need. On a practical level, RTI and the recommended best practices for acceleration are the same.

REMEDICATION VS. ACCELERATION OF LEARNING

The goal of specially-designed instruction for students with disabilities, should be the **acceleration of progress toward specific learning goals rather than remediation in certain deficit areas**. The acceleration of student progress is more effective than remediation of missed skills because it prepares students for new learning by increasing understanding and building connections to prior knowledge.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams are tasked with determining students' unique needs and crafting educational plans that support student success. LDOE's [Staffing and Scheduling Guidance](#) includes some sample IEP language to ensure students with disabilities have access to the highest quality teaching and learning and best practices. For students with significant disabilities, **greater degrees of specially designed instruction** may be required to accelerate learning and help them achieve their IEP goals. However, these decisions should always be based on individual student need and linked directly to ambitious IEP goals as determined by the IEP team.



Conclusion

System-level change aimed at ensuring high-quality teaching and learning requires shared ownership among all levels of stakeholders and strategic planning, from teachers to system leaders and beyond. Maintaining focus on the three best practices of 1) **high-quality core instruction**; 2) providing students **extra time to learn**; and 3) building **content-strong educators** provides the best path forward to improving outcomes for all students, including those with disabilities.

Self-Assessment

- Has the school system prioritized [building dedicated time](#) in the daily schedule for intervention and support?
- Has the school system committed to using high-quality instructional materials? Is there a process in place to analyze current instructional materials and [identify high-quality materials](#) moving forward?
- Will content-strong educators provide reading and math intervention? How can building staff be utilized to ensure content-strong educators have [adequate time](#) in their schedules to provide intervention?
- Do special educators and interventionists participate in teacher collaboration structures alongside content educators?

Resources

- [Six Shifts to Improve Special Education and Other Interventions: A Commonsense Approach for School Leaders](#)
- [Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9](#) (What Works Clearinghouse)
- [Developing Strong Literacy Skills](#) (LDOE/PCG professional development modules gr 4-8)
- [Louisiana Staffing and Scheduling Guidance](#)
- [Louisiana Literacy](#)
- [Accelerate: Louisiana's Tutoring Strategy](#)