

Five Strategies for Serving Students with Disabilities

In their efforts to best serve students with disabilities, school leaders, educators, and special education coordinators may find it easy to get caught up in the language and practice of compliance and lose focus on the guiding principle that **all children have the right to learn together as part of a community**. Five key strategies can help schools keep this principle front and center:

1 ► Establish and reinforce adult culture and mindset

When hiring and developing staff, continuously reorient to what is right for students, and establish responsibility for *how* — not *if* — to get there. Ensure all educators understand that serving students with disabilities is **as much about mindset as it is about skill**.

2 ► Teach and encourage problem-solving in the classroom

Instill in classroom teachers the idea that **everyone is an interventionist**. Support every teacher's clinical understanding of accommodations and modifications — as well as their skill to find solutions without a roadmap.

3 ► Represent students with disabilities in leadership and decision-making

Ensure the individual who is laser-focused on students with disabilities is **in the room when key decisions are made**, so they can have input into those decisions and are in a position to continuously keep the focus on supporting all students.

4 ► Align data systems to the school's mission

Create a data system that shows you whether all students are growing toward the school's mission and to identify necessary interventions. **Data is the unsung hero** in monitoring progress and helping to identify students who may need special supports.

5 ► Know and address students' contexts

Ensure teachers and support staff know **mental health is a central part of the job**. Proactively plan for and support students' well-being and behavior with the same level of intentionality as reading, especially for those who have experienced trauma.



FOR MORE INFORMATION www.bellwethereducation.org

Katie Rouse katie.rouse@bellwethereducation.org

Copyright © 2020 Bellwether Education Partners