

Assessing and Improving Special Education Programs

Dr. Bruce W. Thomas

"A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members"
Mahatma Gandhi

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Acknowledgement

The Center on School Turnaround with project co-leaders Debra Grabill, DDG Consulting LLC, and Lauren Moranda Rhim, National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools

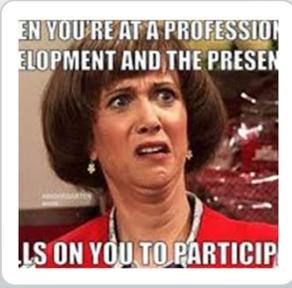
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So, How do I make this presentation NOT SUCK?

- I could...
 - Pass out money
 - Tell jokes
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mNcHDrdMOc>
 - Dance....that for sure would make you laugh
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVTf-CtYVBg>
 - Or, we could just talk about these things together



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1) Staff Qualifications and Expertise

2) Education Opportunities and Learning Environment

3) Effective Education Practices

4) Teamwork and Collaboration

5) School-Community Partnerships

Areas of Focus

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#1

Highly Qualified Staff

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#1

Highly Qualified Staff

Staff holds full credentials/licensure and advanced degrees in content areas.

Staff are experts in working with children and adolescents with and without disabilities.

Staff is skilled at collaborating with specialized instructional support personnel as needed.

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#1

Expert Knowledge of Policies and Regulations

-  Special and general education staff and administration demonstrate a high level of knowledge about implementing effective programs for students with disabilities.
-  Program reflects understanding of how state and local policies and regulations support quality programs for students with disabilities.

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#1

Staff wide expertise in social-emotional and behavioral health

- Staff and administration receive specialized training in how to respond to mental health issues
- Specialized instructional support personnel are present to facilitate delivery of instructional support services

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#1

High Quality Professional Learning

- Administration prioritizes professional learning (PL) through effective scheduling.
- PL activities meet the needs of staff and their roles.
- Training is provided on working in partnership with families.
- PL is aligned with evidence-based and promising practices.



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#2
Education
Opportunities
and Learning
Environment

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#2
Student Access to the
General Curriculum

All students have access to a rigorous curriculum, with a full continuum of services, in the general education setting

All students have access to co-curricular activities with supports as needed.



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#2
Positive Learning Environment

- Evidence-based practices are implemented.
- Positive behavioral supports are in place.
- Families are partners in schoolwide programs.



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#2
Student Engagement



- All students are included in all school activities.
- All students, with or without disabilities, have embedded opportunities to interact in academic and non-academic settings.

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#2
Family Support and Engagement

- Staff communicate and work effectively with parents.
- Families are included in development of school materials, with attention paid to language and culture.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6fclqUH8Q>



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#3
Effective
Education
Practices

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#3
Data-Driven Decision-Making

- Evidence of data-based decision-making is apparent to all stakeholders.
- Programs and practices reflect data-driven decisions.
- IEP meeting notes reflect data-driven decisions.



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#3
Effective Secondary Transition



- Transition planning and exploration of post-secondary opportunities begin when students enter high school, if not earlier.
- Families are provided the support they need to connect their children to appropriate transition services.

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#3
Culturally Competent Practice

- All families feel welcome at school.
- Staff are representative of the community's cultural diversity.
- Administration and staff actively support LGBTQ students and families.

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#3
Effective Early Childhood Transition

- Family members are coached in ways to engage their child in development of self-determination attitudes and skills when the child is very young.



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#4
Teamwork and Collaboration

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#4
Authentic Team Approach

- Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff all have input into how IEPs will ensure that students receive supports.
- Families and students are respected as essential team members.



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#4
Creativity



- Programs are developed to meet the needs of individual students.
- Special education services are integrated into general learning activities.

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#5
School-Community Partnerships



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#5
Community Partnerships

- All students have access to opportunities for volunteer work, internships, employment, and recreation programs.
- Students with disabilities are engaged in service learning/ community-based instruction that is linked to the general curriculum and classroom instruction.



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#5
Adequate Funding of Special Education Programs

- Administrators take proactive steps to coordinate funding of special education services within the larger school program.
- Staff have necessary resources for effective instruction.



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Questions, comments, other.....

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