

Membership, Participation, and Learning: Indicators of Inclusion

MARYLAND COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In an inclusive school, administrators demonstrate leadership by setting forth a vision for equity, appreciation, and value for diversity in the school community. School leaders set clear expectations for teacher behavior, including instructional performance, a positive approach to supporting pro-social behavior, and language that defines the services provided to children and youth. Families, regardless of variability in culture or configuration are valued with active efforts to engage them as partners in their child’s education. Leaders of inclusive schools respond to teachers who need information or skills in order to be effective educators for learners who need differentiated and unique supports.

In an inclusive school, all adults are expected to share the responsibility for each and every child and use effective methods for collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment of learning. To be effective, all adults explicitly teach behavioral routines, instructional rituals, and actions of kindness; and they model acceptance of all members of the class and school community through their words and behavior.



	Visionary and Collaborative School Leadership		
	Adaptive Professional Learning and Coaching		
	Family and Community Partnerships		
	BEHAVIOR	ACADEMIC	INTER-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION
School Wide Systems	School-wide system for <i>behavioral, social, and emotional</i> learning	School-wide expectations for <i>instruction</i> and use of research-based <i>curricula</i>	Co-Planning TIME and effective <i>collaboration</i> STRUCTURES
Classroom Instruction	Positive, clearly defined <i>routines, rituals, and relationship</i> development	Universally designed lessons and differentiation for <i>learner engagement</i>	<i>Collaborative planning, teaching, and evaluating</i> core and specialized instruction
Interventions and Supports	Tiered <i>interventions</i> for those who need more	Tiered <i>interventions</i> for those who need more	<i>Data</i> used to collaboratively plan <i>participation and learning</i> for those who need more

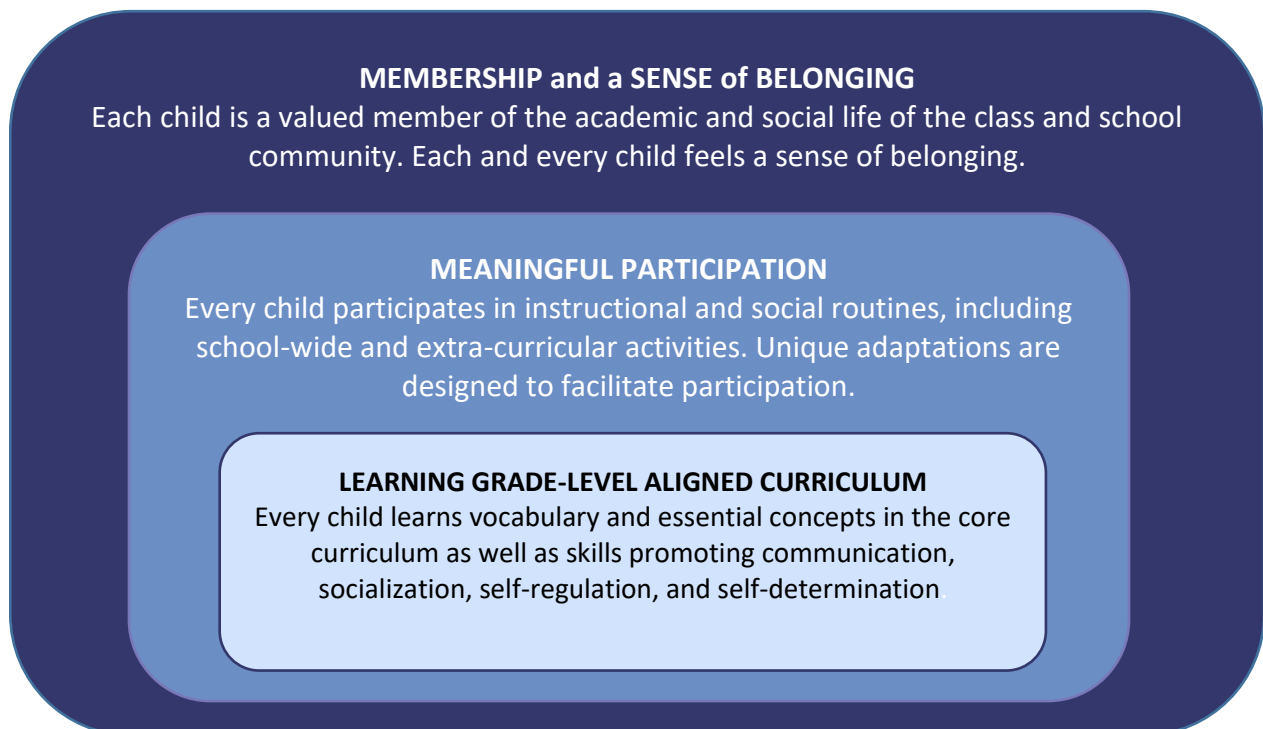
Indicators of Equity and Inclusion for ALL Learners

MARYLAND COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Our colleagues from New Hampshire: Michael McSheehan, Rae Sonnenemeier, and Cheryl Jorgensen have developed a conceptual framework for embedding learning the general education curriculum in the context of school/class membership and meaningful participation in the general education class. In this model, intensive support planning for learners with intensive support needs focuses on ensuring that membership and participation are in place in order to maximize social opportunities and individualized instruction so that learning will occur.

Their “Membership, Participation, and Learning” (MPL) indicators were first published in 2009 in a chapter in the book: [*Augmentative and alternative communication series: Autism spectrum disorders and AAC*](#). The conceptual framework was initially described in their 2010 book: [*The Beyond Access Model: Promoting membership, participation and learning for students with disabilities in the general education classroom*](#). Cheryl Jorgensen further adapted the framework and discusses the application of the model in her book: [*It’s more than “Just Being In” Creating authentic inclusion for students with complex support needs*](#).

The figure below represents Jorgensen et al.’s (2010) conceptual framework: The indicators on the following pages incorporate the thinking of their framework, later adaptations by the authors (McSheehan and Jorgensen) as well as literature from Erik Carter and other researchers (e.g., Jenny Kurth) who study the methods for, influences on, and impact of, inclusive education. The MPL indicators that follow are adaptations of the Beyond Access model and presented with permission of the authors.



MEMBERSHIP

When a child is a “member” of their class and school they enjoy a sense of belonging to a community that values their gifts, talents, and unique characteristics. Perceptions of membership are anchored in feelings of being welcomed, wanted, and respected by classmates, friends, teachers, neighbors, and family members. A lack of membership results in feelings of being disconnected from others and decreases motivation for participation and learning. In schools, a sense of membership is built through respectful and welcoming interactions with the learner and the extent to which accommodations and modifications are designed to support engagement in all aspects of school life. When a learner with a disability is truly a member of their class and school community, there is a presumption of competence and a vision for equity and social reciprocity.

Belonging has been conceptualized as “the assurance of acceptance and value within a particular group. Belonging is often described as having elements of intimacy, connectedness, membership, commitment, solidarity, or reciprocity.”

Erik Carter (2021, p. 13)

MEMBERSHIP INDICATORS	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	None of the time
1. The child/youth attends the age-appropriate general education class in the school they would attend if they did not have a disability.	3	2	1	0
2. The child/youth attends all spaces and activities in the school, like their peers and on the same schedule (e.g., lunch, recess, assembly, entry/exit from school).	3	2	1	0
3. Classmates welcome and invite the learner in extracurricular activities (recess, clubs, sports, etc.).	3	2	1	0
4. The child/youth has at least 3 friends who demonstrate mutual affection and reciprocity in the friendship.	3	2	1	0
5. Class materials (textbooks, etc.) are the same or adapted from the same materials provided to classmates.	3	2	1	0
6. The learning activities for the child/youth are designed from the same curriculum and daily lessons developed for the whole general education class.	3	2	1	0
7. Teachers speak with the child in the same way as they do with other peers (tone, vocabulary, purpose, age-appropriate).	3	2	1	0
8. Classmates and other students in the school speak with and acknowledge the learner in an age-appropriate and welcoming manner.	3	2	1	0
9. Educators refer to the student in the same way as peers (by name and not label or service received).	3	2	1	0
10. The child/youth has equitable opportunities for leadership roles within the class (e.g., line leader, materials manager, etc.).	3	2	1	0
TOTAL: ___ / 30 OR ___ %				

PARTICIPATION

Equity in education is evident when learners have equal opportunity for engagement in the instructional and social activities of a school. When schools use a school-wide multi-tiered system of supports for behavior, academic, and social-emotional learning, learners with disabilities have increased options for receiving interventions and specially designed instruction within the options offered to all learners: with and without disabilities. When schools foster the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles as they develop lesson plans and arrange the class setting, ALL learners have increased choices for participating in instruction with a positive impact on learning. A myriad of research studies supports the conclusion that increased engagement in the learning and social life of the school are associated with higher levels of academic achievement. Consequently, it is critical that all learners have a communication system that is useful, used, and available for peers to use as well as the learner.

PARTICIPATION INDICATORS	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	None of the time
11. The child/youth participates in classroom activities and school routines (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance, lunch count, jobs, school play, field trips, etc.).	3	2	1	0
12. The daily schedule and the timing of the child/youth's entrance and departure from activities or classes is the same as peers.	3	2	1	0
13. The child/youth is actively engaged in lessons and assignments that are the same as, or adaptations of, the lessons and assignments for the rest of the class.	3	2	1	0
14. The learner participates in lessons for the amount of time similar to classmates and has alternative options for engagement when needed.	3	2	1	0
15. The learner has a communication system that allows for social, age-appropriate peer interactions, learning (curriculum vocabulary), requests, affirmation, negation, joke-telling, and choice, etc.	3	2	1	0
16. The learner communicates with classmates within learning and social activities (initiating, sharing, responding, questioning, etc.)	3	2	1	0
17. Adults and peers support the learner to participate in general education whole-class discussions: brainstorming, calling out answers, taking notes, writing on the board.	3	2	1	0
18. During instruction, the child/youth shares information, records or receives adapted notes, and contributes to learning discussions.	3	2	1	0
19. During non-academic activities, accommodations and adaptations are provided for equitable and active participation.	3	2	1	0
20. Teachers provide supports and environmental accommodations to enable the learner to remain in or return to the class when behavioral breaks are needed.	3	2	1	0
TOTAL: ___ / 30 OR ___ %				

LEARNING

Equity in education means that ALL learners have the same opportunity to learn grade level curriculum, regardless of ability, background, language, or other identity. Promoting membership and participation provides the basis for incidental as well as intentional learning. When lessons are designed with UDL principles, they can be more easily further adapted to address the unique needs resulting from a learner’s disability. This not only ensures access to the curriculum but the opportunity to acquire academic vocabulary and grade level concepts. With specific adaptations (specially designed instruction), the learner can simultaneously acquire skills in targeted goals based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition to instruction with classmates, the learner may need focused and intensive instruction on basic academic skills or functional (independence, self-advocacy, and self-regulation) skills that increase school and community inclusion.

LEARNING INDICATORS	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	None of the time
21. The general education teacher is the primary instructor unless the special education teacher is assigned as a full-time co-teacher.	3	2	1	0
22. When co-teaching, the special and general education teachers collaborate to alternate who delivers instruction to the children/youth with disabilities.	3	2	1	0
23. Paraprofessionals do not sit next to the student and only provide as much support as needed to maximize participation and learning within lessons.	3	2	1	0
24. Adults provide behavioral and academic instruction with strategies that are effective and systematic, and based on research with similar learners.	3	2	1	0
25. The instructional goals for the child/youth are based on skills aligned with the grade level curriculum.	3	2	1	0
26. Instruction on individual learner goals is embedded within whole class activities as well as small group-within class instruction (e.g., station teaching) and during intervention periods designed for students with and without disabilities to receive supplemental interventions based on performance data.	3	2	1	0
27. Any instructional time spent out of the general education class is to strengthen skills that are needed for participation and learning in the general education class.	3	2	1	0
28. Except for reasons of privacy and confidentiality, all related services are embedded through a collaborative teaching model within the general education class.	3	2	1	0
29. Progress on skills leading to grade level performance are reported in quarterly report cards in the same way as other students and supplemented for families as needed.	3	2	1	0
30. The learner makes progress on literacy and numeracy skills.	3	2	1	0
TOTAL: ___ / 30 OR ___ %				

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***Thank you, Michael, Cheryl, and Rae
for your leadership and devoted work
to promote the inclusion of each and every child
as a valued friend and learner in their school community.***