

Extended Myths & Facts About Inclusionary Practices in Washington



Myth #1: Costs of Inclusion

Myth #2: Who Can Provide SDI?

Myth #3: Readiness for Instruction in General Education

Myth #4: IEP & General Education Curriculum and Standards

Myth #5: Parents and Inclusion

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Myth #8: Race/Ethnicity and Disproportionate Placement

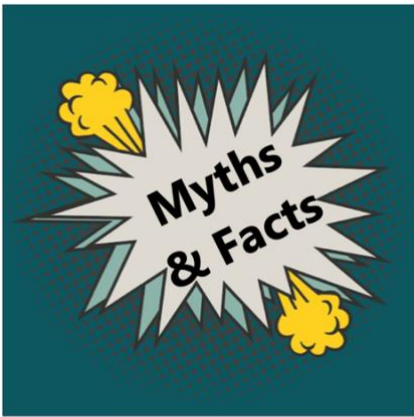
Myth #9: Access to Universal Behavior Supports

Myth #10: Multilingual Learners with Disabilities



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About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #1: Costs of Inclusion

Myth #1:

Including students with extensive support needs costs more than educating them in segregated special education programs.

Fact:

Providing flexible services in general education settings is not more expensive. In fact, it enables schools to maximize resources to meet the needs of each and every student.

The Truth Is...

- Schools do not automatically receive more funding for placing students in more restrictive placements.
- Special education funding is connected to student needs and not tied to specific programs or the percentage of time students with IEPs spend in special education settings.
- [WA Safety Net Funding](#) (reimbursement for high-cost services) is based on the services in a student's individualized education program (IEP), not the student's placement or program.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- Financial resources follow students based on need, not based on placement decisions.
- Washington updated its tiered multiplier for special education funding in 2023-25, [RCW 28A.150.390 \(2\)\(b\)\(i\)\(B\)](#) to include a larger multiplier for students with disabilities who are participating in general education settings for 80% or more of their day. Details about the funding formulas can be found on the [Special Education Funding in Washington State](#) webpage.

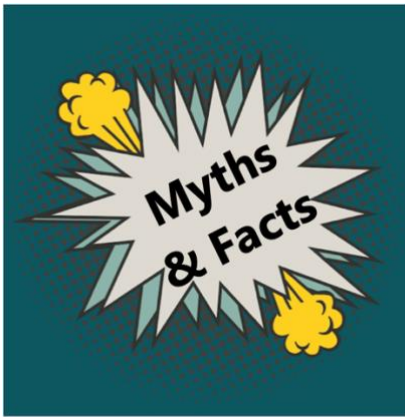


Supportive Research/Articles

- [Myth: The High Cost of Inclusion](#) (Inclusive Schools Network, Short article)
- [How Peers Can Support Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) Use by Students with Significant Communication Needs](#) (TIES Center TIP#1, Short Article)
- [Economic and Demographic Predictors of Inclusive Education](#) (Cosier & Causton-Theoharis, 2011, Article Abstract)
- [Inclusive Service Delivery: A Proactive Model for Better Educating of ALL Students](#) (Vandercook, Telfer, Ryndak & Giangreco, 2018/2019; Short Article)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Examine system resource decisions and allocations. Are they based on research and best practices or beliefs and historical practice? For additional information visit the Superintendent of Public Instruction's [Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds to Support Student Success](#) document.
- Redesign schoolwide schedules and resource allocation (staffing, etc.) for inclusive education and support. Visit the University of Washington Haring Center [Master Schedules](#) document and the [Flexible Service Delivery](#) document for more information.
- Students with extensive support needs frequently do not need 1:1 support to be included in general education classrooms. Consider how natural supports, such as building peer relationships, can enhance student learning. Visit the TIES Center's series on the [Power of Peers](#) for more details.
- Ensure that your process for redesigning schoolwide schedules and allocating resources centers families' voices in decision-making. Visit how to build inclusive schools and communities with the [Community Conversation Toolkit](#) by the Family Engagement Collaborative to learn more.
- Design and implement systems to provide universal supports in community and general education settings to foster a culture where belonging and advocating for support and services is encouraged. For example, the Office of Special Education Programs describes in its [Dear Colleague Letter on the Provision of Assistive Technology Devices and Services](#) how to utilize assistive technology to make the environment accessible for all students (e.g., voice to text, voice to text transcription, a variety of writing tools, and audiobooks).



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #2: Who Can Provide SDI?

Myth #2:

Students with extensive support needs can only receive specially designed instruction (SDI) from their case manager or assigned special education teacher.

Fact:

SDI can be provided by any teacher or educational staff member as long as the SDI is designed and supervised by special education licensed staff.

The Truth Is...

- SDI should be provided to students across all instructional environments, as needed, to access and learn throughout the day. Supporting a variety of staff to provide SDI helps to achieve this.
- General education teachers, related service providers, and paraeducators can support the delivery of SDI to students with IEPs who are in general education settings.
- All SDI is important in a student's complete education program no matter who provides it. IEP service minutes include SDI provided by all teachers and educational staff members in any environment.
- If a student with a disability is also an English learner, the IEP should address their language learning needs, considering proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in both English and any other language of instruction.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- [The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(Sec 300.39\)](#) states that SDI is to "... ensure access of the child to the general curriculum so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children."



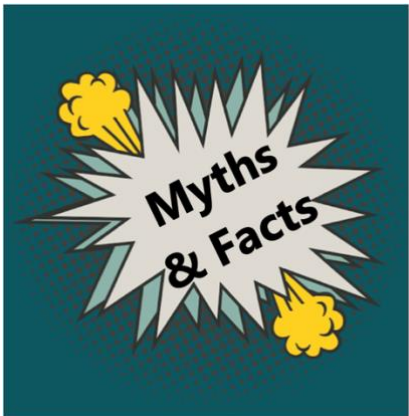
- Per Washington statute [WAC 392-172A-02090 \(1\)\(i\)](#): General education teachers and paraeducators may assist in the provision of special education or related services, so long as the instruction is designed and supervised by special education staff. Student progress must be monitored and evaluated by special education certificated staff or for related services, a certificated educational staff associate.
- The “myth” that SDI provided by general education staff does not matter may be predicated on the inaccurate belief that a student's IEP is the entire education program. In fact, a student’s IEP details a student's access to and progress in the general education curriculum based on grade-level standards. IEP service minutes are for direct and indirect special education services provided in addition to and as part of general education minutes to support access and progress in the general education curriculum. This could include delivering SDI (e.g., use of visuals) within a general education lesson (e.g., identifying figurative language in poetry). For more information, check out the [Comprehensive Inclusive Education in Washington](#) (2024).

Supportive Research/Articles

- [Misperceptions and Facts about Specially Designed Instruction](#) (Bowman & Ghere, 2024; Short Article)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Ensure that district and school messaging align with state statutes regarding SDI provisions.
- Consider whether special education staff roles and responsibilities are defined based on roles and responsibilities that support shared accountability and responsibility for all students and positive student outcomes.
- [Consider the extent to which the IEP addresses](#): (1) access to and progress in the general education grade-level curriculum and core standards, (2) how SDI will be integrated across the school day through multiple means, and (3) how special educators will provide direct and indirect support for SDI (whether SDI is provided directly by special educators or designed and supervised by them).
- Consider how funding sources can be braided to provide flexibility in how staff meet a variety of student needs. (For example, a school social worker or intervention teacher is funded by both special education and Title 1 funds to provide small group support for heterogeneous groups of students.) This [document](#) by the WA Office of the Superintendent offers ideas for braiding funding.
- Examine your IEPs for multilingual learners with disabilities. Do they refer to the students’ Present Levels of Performance in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing in English and any other languages of instruction? How are these needs integrated into SDI?



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #3: Readiness for Instruction in General Education

Myth #3:

Students with extensive support needs must show they are ready to be in the general education setting.

Fact:

Every student is a general education student. All students have the right to be educated in general education settings.

The Truth Is...

- Students should not be required to reach specified benchmarks before receiving instruction in general education. For example, a third grader who has achieved Kindergarten proficiency in literacy should be educated in the third grade, general education classroom.
- Students with IEPs, including students with extensive support needs, should not have to "earn their time" in general education, prove they will not engage in challenging behaviors, or achieve at grade level academically before gaining access to general education environments, grade-level peers, and grade-level standards.
- Every student generates general education funding for their districts and schools, even students with extensive support needs.
- For English learners with disabilities who have extensive support needs, there are ways to make general education instruction more comprehensible and embed English learner instructional strategies and services so students can be educated in general education for the majority of the day.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- Inclusion is a way of envisioning education where all students having a right to meaningfully participate in the general education setting, both academically and socially to the fullest extent possible. This is realized when all students, regardless of whether they have an IEP, are provided with the services, supports, and accommodations that support them to learn in the general education classroom, interact with peers, and engage the core curriculum.
- Inclusive instruction challenges the belief that students in special education must conform or prove themselves to join general education classes. This belief assumes that general education is inflexible and that it is the student who needs to change or achieve certain thresholds to be included. It perpetuates dual education systems where students in special education in segregated settings are



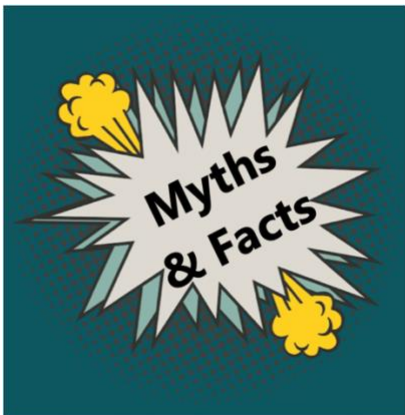
marginalized. We know that when general education is flexible and uses inclusive instructional strategies, including Universal Design for Learning, a wide range of learners engage in learning.

Supportive Research Articles

- [Taking the Alternative Assessment Does NOT Mean Education in a Separate Setting!](#) (TIES Center, Brief)
- [Outcomes of Inclusive Versus Separate Placement: A Matched Pairs Comparison. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities](#) (Gee, Gonzales, & Cooper, 2020; Article Abstract)
- [A Landmark Study Strikes a Resounding Note for Inclusion](#) (Edutopia, 2022; Short Video)
- [Achievement of Students with IEPs and Associated Relationships with an Inclusive MTSS Framework](#) (Choi, McCart, & Sailor, 2020, Article Abstract)
- [English Learner Toolkit - Office of English Language Acquisition. See Chapters 5 and 6 \(U.S. Dept of Educ\)](#)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Ensure that students with extensive support needs are included in Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), including academic, behavior, and social-emotional supports, as described in [Washington's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework](#) document. MTSS provides a means for students to access the core curriculum and receive individual support, as needed.
- Ensure time is provided for general education, English language development, and special education teachers to collaborate to plan inclusive instruction so that multilingual learners (ML) with disabilities can be effectively taught in the general education classroom.
- Begin inclusive education in early childhood, as described in the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education's report titled [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#). Plan for students with extensive support needs to transition to kindergarten in general education classrooms, provide professional development, and allocate staffing to avoid restrictive placements simply because they changed levels in the system.
- Assign every student to a general education teacher's roster, ensuring a seat in the classroom without negotiation. This underscores that special education and other services supplement general education.
- Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as the framework for lesson planning for all students, including students with disabilities with extensive support needs and those who are ML. This one-pager titled [Universal Design for Learning](#) by the University of Washington Haring Center and the [Design for Each and Every Learner: Universal Design for Learning Modules](#) developed in Washington are useful starting places.
- Provide examples that illustrate how students with extensive support needs can engage in the general education curriculum and instruction. For example, these TIES Center's resources provide strategies for [teaching standard-based lessons](#), [using graphic organizers](#), or doing [turn and talk in the classroom](#). Reinforce that Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) can be delivered in general education classrooms. (See Myth #2: Who Can Provide SDI?)
- Include data and stories about students with disabilities in all district and school professional development. Identify environmental, attitudinal, and other barriers to general education curriculum and access. This webinar titled [Building a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging in Washington State](#) by the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education links these topics together.
- Presume competence for all. This article on [Using the Least Dangerous Assumption in Educational Decisions](#) helps with applying this foundational principle.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #4: IEPs & General Education Curriculum and Standards

Myth #4:

When a student has extensive support needs, their curriculum is their IEP, meaning their instruction focuses exclusively on their annual IEP goals.

Fact:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require that all students make progress toward grade-level, general education standards. This applies to all students with disabilities, including those with extensive support needs.

The Truth Is...

- All students eligible for special education should have IEPs that are aligned with grade-level learning standards, including students with extensive support needs.
- Separate/alternative curriculum often have little connection or alignment to state standards and the general curriculum

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- Washington State's rule [WAC 392-172A-01175](#) (2)(c) states: Specially Designed Instruction means adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of a student with a disability and ensure access to and progress in the general curriculum.
- The [U. S. Supreme Court Case Decision *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*](#), determined that IEPs must be reasonably calculated to ensure reasonable progress in light of a student's unique circumstances.

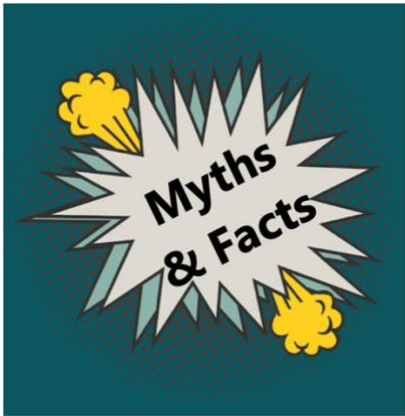


Supportive Research/Articles

- [Standards-based Instruction for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) (TIES Center, Video)
- [The General Education Curriculum—Not an Alternate Curriculum!](#) (TIES Center, Brief)
- [Investigating the Alignment Between English Language Arts Curricula Developed for Students with Significant Intellectual Disability and the CCSS](#) (Taub et al., 2019; Article Abstract)
- [Academic Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms: Same Content Standards, Alternate Achievement Standards](#) (TIES Center, Brief)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Engage in discussions among IEP team members about how and when the IEP goals that are linked to the general education curriculum and routines and specially designed instruction (SDI) can be provided in inclusive settings.
- Use the process titled [Comprehensive Inclusive Education in Washington](#) to write and implement inclusive IEPs. When considering how IEPs in the district are written, ask if the goals support: (1) access and progress in the general education grade-level curriculum, (2) what specially designed instruction (SDI) will be integrated across the school day through multiple means, and (3) the direct and indirect service minutes that special educators provide to support student SDI that is provided either directly by special educators or by others if the SDI is designed and supervised by special education.
- Ensure that general education teachers, special education teachers, and English language development teachers, where appropriate, have time to collaborate. Collaboration will help ensure that general education standards, including English proficiency standards where relevant, and individual goals can be met. This can be achieved through in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and the use of shared collaborative lesson-planning documents. The starting point for collaborative planning is the general education standards and curriculum and the general education context. Refer to the [5-15-45 Tool](#) for what meaningful collaboration can look like whether teachers have 5 minutes, 15 minutes, or 45 minutes to meet.
- Explain to the families the importance of the education program accessing and learning based on the grade level general education standards and the IEP goals. Both are important. Support families to understand the connection thread between inclusive PreK-12 education based on high academic standards and post-secondary options and integrated employment options for their child.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #5: Parents and Inclusion

Myth #5:

All parents want their children with disabilities who have extensive support needs to be educated in separate programs or classrooms because they feel children will be safer, accepted, and receive more intensive instruction.

Fact:

Many parents know that inclusive classrooms provide safe environments that enhance students' feelings of belonging and provide a range of academic instruction to meet their child's needs. Others may not have experienced effective inclusive education for their child, so they question inclusive education.

The Truth Is...

- Students with disabilities with extensive support needs in inclusive settings build relationships with their peers, both with and without disabilities. Through these relationships, they feel a sense of belonging.
- Inclusive classrooms are safe classrooms. Students with extensive support needs have many familiar adults and peers who know them. This is different from separate classrooms, where a limited number of adults often know them.
- Inclusion takes deliberate action. When effective systems are put in place both students and families experience the benefits.
- Research indicates that separate special education classrooms for students with extensive support needs frequently show far less student interaction and instruction than happens in general education classrooms.
- Instruction in inclusive classrooms focuses on both instruction related to the general education standards and content instruction that addresses individual goals. Both are important for enhancing student outcomes.



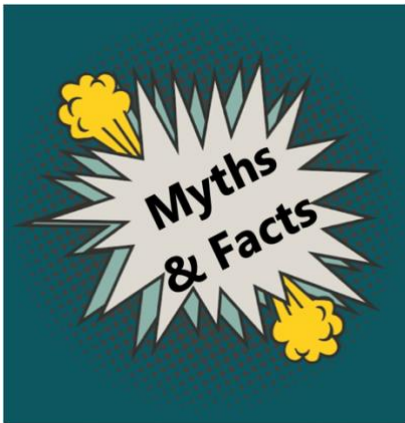
Evidence to Support the Facts

Supportive Research/Articles

- [Achieving Inclusion: What every parent should know](#) (Causton-Theoharis & Kasa, 2012; Brief)
- [Embedded instruction in the inclusive classroom](#) (TIES TIP #20) (Bowman & Taub, 2021; Short Article)
- [From isolation to inclusion: Anne's journey](#) (Ellis & Kozlak, 2018/19; Short Article)
- [IPP Demonstration Sites Project: Ruby Bridges Elementary](#) (Univ of WA Haring Center; webinar)
- [Ecobehavioral Analysis of the Experiences of Students with Complex Support Needs in Different Classroom Types](#) (Zagona et al., 2022; Article abstract)
- [Taking sides: Parent views on inclusion for their children with severe disabilities](#) (Palmer et al., 2001; Article)
- [Wide open spaces: Maggie's story.](#) (2018/19) (Sheldon, 2018/19; Short Article)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Build and nurture a culture of belonging for all students and families in the district and at each school. This tool, [Creating Communities of Belonging for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#), provides examples and strategies for building an inclusive culture.
- Engage in meaningful discussions with educators and parents that challenge beliefs about outcomes for students with extensive support needs when they are educated in inclusive versus segregated settings. This parent brief, [Debunking Myths about Inclusive Education for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#), is a useful resource to support those discussions. Involve a cultural liaison or interpreter for families who are not proficient in English.
- Begin with a vision statement for the student. Support parents in forming a meaningful, long-term vision for their child's future that is connected to inclusive education opportunities and the IEP.
- Emphasize evidence-based best practices for inclusive education and students' civil right to non-segregated education as part of professional development and team consultations.
- Ensure that an inclusive IEP is written so families see the relationship between the IEP and how individual student goals will be implemented during the school day. The [Education Day-at-a-Glance](#) in the [Comprehensive Inclusive Education in Washington](#) process supports teams with linking IEP goals to students' daily schedules.
- Maintain a transparent school culture that includes collaboration, distributed leadership, and strong communication with families. Show evidence of collaborative structures and systems in place that ensure special education teachers, general education classroom teachers, and families are collaborating consistently on a comprehensive education program.
- Ensure that post-school transition conversations and planning start early for students with extensive support needs and their families, including strong agency linkages with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and/or the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #6: Disability Category and Classroom Placement

Myth #6:

A student's diagnosis or disability category determines their classroom or program placement.

Fact:

Placement should not be predetermined by a disability label. A student's disability label should not drive placement in more restrictive settings.

The Truth Is...

- For all students with IEPs, including students with extensive support needs, the least restrictive environment (LRE) is determined by the student's IEP team. This decision should not be predetermined by disability category or label.
- General education placement should be authentically considered before more restrictive options. By law, the IEP team should consider what supplemental special education services would support a student in a general educational classroom before ever considering placement within a self-contained environment or separate school.
- Ideally, students with extensive support needs attend their neighborhood schools rather than schools with a cluster of specialized special education classrooms or programs or separate schools. This sustains natural proportions of students across schools and supports increasing access to general education.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- In Washington law, [WAC 392-172A-020505](#), special education services must be provided: "(1) To the maximum extent appropriate in the general education environment with students who are nondisabled; and (2) Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of students eligible for



special education from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.”

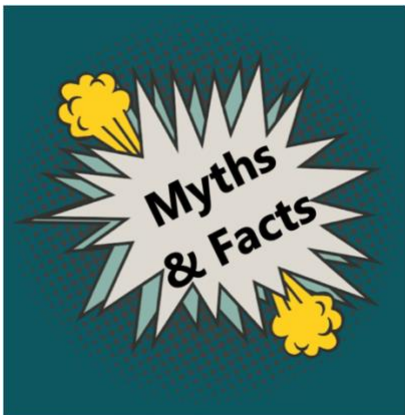
- An IEP is tailored to meet a student's individual needs. When an IEP is put in place that supports a student’s progress in general education and is based on individual needs, considering a predetermined disability-based program is counterintuitive.

Supportive Research/Articles

- [Trends in the educational placement of students with intellectual disability in the United States over the past 40 years.](#) (Brock, 2018; Article Abstract)
- For Washington state and district LRE data, OSPI created a [Video Walkthrough of Washington State’s Least Restrictive Environment Data Trends](#) and an accompanying data spreadsheet titled [Washington Trend Data by LEA- 2023 Update \(XLSX download\)](#). Both can be found on the [Special Education Data Collection Summaries’](#) webpage.
- [Taking the Alternate Assessment Does NOT Mean Education in a Separate Setting!](#) (TIES Center Brief #2). (Sabia & Thurlow, 2019; Parent Brief)
- [Separate School Placement Trends by Category and Age for Students with Extensive Support Needs \(TIES Center Report #105\)](#) (Wakeman et al., 2022; Report)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Regularly monitor district and school data related to disability categories, meaningful access to general education settings, and progress in the general education curriculum. Be mindful to disaggregate the data by disability, race, and English Language status to identify concerning trends. For example, are African American students being educated in more restrictive settings? Are students with intellectual disabilities primarily being educated in self-contained classrooms?
- Prioritize all students attending their neighborhood schools and build the capacity of staff to teach all students in inclusive settings.
- Ensure that every student is on a general education teacher’s roster and has a seat in a general education classroom even if they currently are not in the general education classroom all day. This means no one must negotiate where a student belongs and who is responsible for educating the child. It also clearly conveys that special education services are supplementary to general education.
- Consistently engage in placement discussions to maximize the amount of time a student spends in general education settings with additional supplemental instruction and supports, before considering segregated placements. Create a plan to increase the amount of time that students with extensive support needs are in general education for all or most of the school day, including during core academic content.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #7: Cognitive Assessment and Academics

Myth #7:

Completing a cognitive assessment and having a cognitive assessment score is necessary to have academic IEP goals and specially designed instruction that supports academic learning as part of a student's IEP.

Fact:

All students are general education students. All students receive academic instruction.

The Truth Is...

- IEP goals and service areas—including academic, communication, adaptive, and social skills—should be aligned to grade-level learning standards and routines and reflect student needs. They should not be determined by a single test score or measure.
- It is the responsibility of each district to ensure that all students with extensive support needs receive academic instruction based on grade-level general education standards in addition to instruction that meets their functional and adaptive needs (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).
- Online IEP systems used by districts should offer case managers flexibility to individualize service areas. For example, IEP service areas should not have "locked" categories that only map back to the evaluation.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- Federal education laws require that all students in the same grade, including those with extensive support needs, receive instruction based on the same grade-level standards.



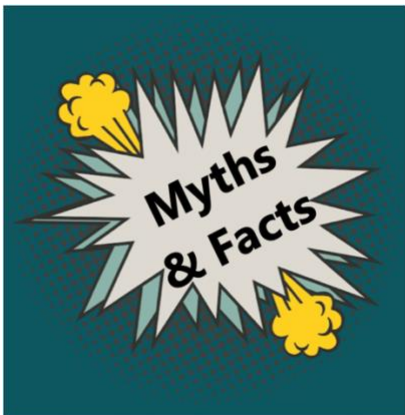
- Only one percent of Washington students should take the state alternate assessment that is based on alternate achievement standards. The achievement levels for this assessment are based on grade-level content standards, but possibility at reduced breadth, depth, and/or complexity.

Supportive Research/Articles

- [Assessment for Students with Cognitive Disabilities \(WA-AIM\)](#) and [WA-AIM Access Point Framework](#) (OSPI Guidance)
- [Reimagining Learning: How Inclusionary Practices, Equitable Grading and Course Flexibility Support Every Learner](#) (WASA AWSP Presentation, 2023)
- [Providing Meaningful General Education Curriculum Access to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) (TIES Center Parent Brief, 2020)
- [Comprehensive Inclusive Education in Washington](#) (OSPI & TIES Center, 2024)
- [MTSS For All: Including Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) (TIES Center Brief, 2020)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Plan instruction based on grade-level standards. Apply CAST's [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#) to plan and implement accessible general education lessons that are effective for all.
- Identify natural learning opportunities during general education transitions/routines. Maximize these opportunities to teach adaptive skills using effective embedded instructional strategies.
- Special curriculum resources used for students with extensive support needs should be based on [peer-reviewed research](#) and aligned to the student's enrolled grade-level content.
- Provide training to support IEP teams (including parents) on how to write strengths-based present levels of performance and evaluations, as well as inclusive, standards-aligned IEPs and IEP goals. The [Comprehensive Inclusive Education in Washington](#) process supports teams in the process.
- All students with disabilities, including those with extensive support needs, must be included in MTSS planning and implementation. MTSS provides formative, interim, and summative data within each tier that routinely informs student learning and goal attainment. This document, [MTSS for All: Including Students with the Most Significant Disabilities](#), provides additional information about data related to student learning.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #8: Race/Ethnicity and Disproportionate Placement

Myth #8:

There is no relationship between student race/ethnicity and decisions about placement in the least restrictive environments (LRE).

Fact:

In Washington state, Black students with disabilities are more likely to be placed in special education classrooms than their White peers with disabilities, even when they have similar academic performance and behavior.

The Truth Is...

- For decades, students from diverse racial/ethnic groups have been overrepresented in special education. Concurrently, nationwide data show that students of color with disabilities are placed in more restrictive placements and spend less time in the general education classroom at higher rates than compared to White students with disabilities. These negative trends have been particularly impactful on Black students in terms of over-identification for special education and for Black students with disabilities in terms of less access to general education and increased discipline, including the use of restraint and seclusion.

Evidence to Support the Facts

Keep in Mind

- In Washington state, this is particularly evident for Black students with disabilities and across multiple disability categories. In 2023-2024,
 - Only 52.6% of Black students with disabilities spent 80% or more of their school day in a general education classroom, compared to 65.1% of all other students with disabilities.
 - 16.7% of Black students with disabilities were in general education settings for less than 40% of their school day, compared to 9.3% of all other students with disabilities.
- Despite the gradual success since 2018 of increasing the number of students with disabilities being educated in the general education classroom in Washington state for a greater percentage of the day, state data show that a greater percentage of Black students with disabilities continue to be systematically excluded from general education settings.
- Black students with disabilities experienced the least inclusion in general education compared to all other racial/ethnicity groups in a 10-year period in a large district in Western U.S. (Cooc, 2022).



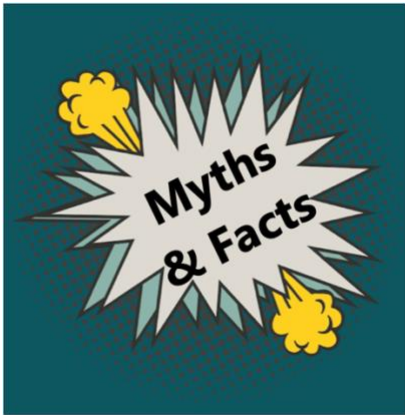
- For current data on Washington State LRE, check out the [Washington State Special Education Data Collections](#) LRE video walkthrough and district data by LRE.

Supportive Research/Articles

- U.S. Department of Education (2024). [44th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of Individual with Education Disabilities Act, 2022](#) (Report)
- Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (2018). [Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System](#) (Report)
- Cooc, N. (2022). Disparities in general education inclusion for students of color with disabilities: Understanding when and why. *Journal of School Psychology*, 90, 43-59.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34969487/>

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Districts and schools can disaggregate their LRE data by race and ethnicity to identify areas of disproportionality in student placement. Concurrently, disaggregate other data (e.g., LRE and disability, attendance, suspensions, and dismissals) to identify relationships among these important data points and any evidence of disproportionality.
- School leaders should monitor and address early gaps in inclusion for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and continue to monitor inclusion rates and barriers to inclusive placements into middle and high school.
- Examine how test scores may be used differently across diverse student groups in decisions about classroom placement.
- Review the Individual Education Program (IEP) team policy and procedures to better understand the decision-making process for student LRE decisions. Determine if policies and procedures should be modified or if additional professional development is needed to ensure responsive, equitable, unbiased decision-making.
- Support general education, special education, and multilingual education to collaborate to create culturally responsive, general education classroom environments where all students feel a genuine sense of belonging and are supported to learn.
- Support all education staff in developing cultural competence and teaching using culturally responsive mindsets and skillsets so every student sees themselves in the curriculum and engages with learning. These practices help create a culture of belonging and respect for each and every student in general education classrooms, including for all students of different races and ethnicities with disabilities and those with extensive support needs.
- Engage with families to discuss their valued life outcomes for their children. Validate and affirm their family values and culture. Create pathways to meaningfully include family culture in a student's education.
- Commit to recruit and support a diverse teaching force that is representative of the students, families, and communities in the district.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #9: Access to Universal Behavior Supports

Myth #9:

Students with extensive support needs who have behaviors that interfere with their learning benefit most from individualized behavior interventions.

Fact:

Students with extensive support needs are entitled to benefit from all three tiers of behavior support within Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) systems.

The Truth Is...

- All students, including students with extensive support needs, can benefit from Multi-tiered Systems of Support. This includes robust Tier 1 instruction which provides ongoing positive behavior and social emotional supports. Some students benefit from additional Tier 2 supports, such as pre-teaching, re-teaching, or reinforcement of positive behaviors and relationship building through small groups. Finally, a few students benefit from additional individualized behavior intervention plans or Tier 3 supports.
- Students with extensive support needs benefit when Tier 1 and Tier 2 expectations and resources are made accessible for all learners, including the use of visuals along with text, providing expectations in smaller steps, and providing schedules or checklists.
- When a school implements inclusive school-wide PBIS, students access and engage with it regardless of their placement, including students with extensive support needs.

Evidence to Support the Fact

Keep in Mind

- School-wide PBIS aims to support all students, but those in self-contained special education often miss out on its full benefits (Walker et al., 2018).
- Research shows that using PBIS Tier 1 strategies with students needing extensive support reduces disruptive behavior and increases academic engagement (Conradi, 2020).
- Behavior is communication. Students express their needs and desires in ways they are able. Understanding the purpose of their behavior and supporting effective communication is crucial (TIES Center TIP #30; Kearns, 2022).



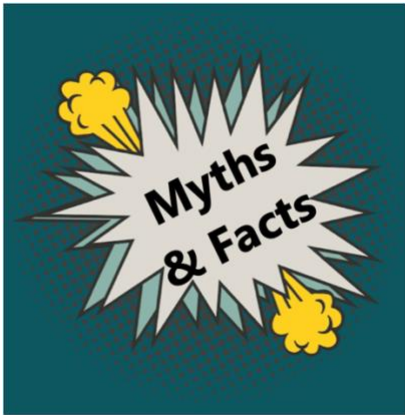
- Historically, special educators who work with students with extensive support needs haven't been included in PBIS leadership teams or training (Walker et al., 2018). When general and special educators have the training and skills to implement Tier 1 and 2 with all students, including those with extensive support needs, everyone benefits.

Supportive Research/Articles

- [Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction MTSS Framework](#)
- [Including Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities in PBIS Tier 1](#) (TIES Center; Practice-based Video Series)
- Conradi, L. A. (2020). [The Effects of the Good Behavior Game on the Academic, Disruptive, and Social Behaviors of Students with Severe Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms](#) (Doctoral dissertation)
- Loman, S., Strickland-Cohen, M. K., & Walker, V. (2018). [Promoting the Accessibility of SWPBIS for Students with Severe Disabilities](#) (Research Abstract)
- [Providing Access to School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities \(TIES Center Brief #10\)](#)
- [Behavior is Communication](#) (TIES Center TIP #30; Practice-based article)
- [Teaching PBIS Tier 1 School-wide Behavioral Expectations to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) (TIES Center TIP #31; Practice-based article)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- To ensure all students are considered in school-wide positive behavior planning, the leadership team should be cross-disciplinary and include staff with diverse expertise, such as teaching students with extensive support needs.
- Teach PBIS Tier 1 expectations to all students, including those with extensive support needs. Use the Universal Design for Learning framework to make lessons accessible and ensure school-wide expectation signs use accessible language, visuals, and are placed at an accessible height.
- When evaluating PBIS universal supports, ensure data tools assess the inclusion and response of students with extensive support needs.
- IEP teams should review behavioral data from students' intervention plans to evaluate their response to universal prevention efforts.
- Share successes of all students, including students with extensive support needs, as part of school-wide celebrations.
- Ensure all staff are trained to implement all PBIS tiers and support the success of students with extensive support needs in inclusive environments.



About Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Myth #10: Multilingual Learners with Disabilities

Myth #10:

Special education services are the only services needed to ensure that multilingual learners (ML) with extensive support needs are successful in inclusive general education classrooms.

Fact:

For students with extensive support needs who have been exposed to multiple languages at home, ensuring meaningful access to the general education curriculum may involve providing English language development in addition to special education services.

The Truth Is...

- U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Office of English Language Acquisition, and the Office of Special Education Programs' guidance require that students who qualify for Special Education and English language development services must receive both services.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to consider a child's English language proficiency when developing the IEP so that supports and services are appropriate.

Evidence to Support the Fact

Keep in Mind

- It is critical that IEP teams for MLs with extensive support needs include individuals who know the student's language learning needs. These individuals should include those with training in second language acquisition. An IEP team that includes an expert in second language acquisition will make the most informed decisions about the needs of the student. The collaborative process reduces misidentification of MLs with disabilities.

Supportive Research/Articles

- OSPI Presentation (March 16, 2023) [Reducing the Overidentification of Multilingual Learners for Special Education Services & Providing Appropriate Services for Dually Qualified MLLs](#)



- [Washington State Multilingual Learner Policies and Practices Guide](#) (2024) (starting at p. 61)
- U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education Dear Colleague Letter (2015): [English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents](#)
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (2016). [English Learner Toolkit Chapter 6 - Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities](#)
- U.S. Dept of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2021). [Policy Letter 21-03: November 15, 2021, to Boals](#)

Strategies for Dispelling the Myth

- Ensure appropriate language interpretation and translation support to allow for parents' full participation in the student's IEP team. Parents will have important insights about how a child communicates at home and in the community.
- Gather information from the student, parents/caregivers, and family about the languages and modalities the student recognizes and uses to communicate. Know how the family's home languages, sign language, gestures, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, and other means of communication are used to communicate with their child and how their child communicates with them.
- Identify the student's skills with listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the home languages. The ALTELLA Project's [Considerations for Educators Serving English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) brief emphasizes the importance of collecting multiple forms of information and involving multiple stakeholders in decision making.
- Ensure the student has a means of communication so you know what they understand and can do with language. Some students will need an AAC device. See [TIES TIP #23: Supporting the Communication Needs of Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) Users Who are English Learners](#). Be intentional to create opportunities for MLs to communicate using multiple communication modes and multiple spoken languages, as appropriate.
- Ensure that the IEP contains information about the student's home language use and that this information is applied to planned supports and services.
- Build in continuous opportunities for general educators, special educators, and ML teachers to collaborate to integrate their instructional supports and create coherence for the student.
- Regularly monitor both the student's IEP goals and their English language development goals.
- Stay up to date on required [English language proficiency assessments](#) on the OSPI website. OSPI adopted the [WIDA Alternate ACCESS](#) in 2018 to assess the English language proficiency of MLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Only MLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in these assessments each year. The results give all teachers a better understanding of what a student knows and can do in English and meet federal English language proficiency monitoring and reporting requirements.