Support is a Verb: What Inclusive Teams Do

In inclusive schools, support isn't something a student gets—it's something educators do. This living, breathing resource is grounded in the idea that support isn't a place, a person, or a program—it's a series of intentional actions. It's not about adding more adults to the room; it's about making thoughtful moves that help every student belong, grow, and succeed.

Inclusive teams operate with purpose. They are creative, collaborative, and consistent. Most importantly, they take deliberate steps to implement evidence-informed strategies— drawn from the 13 key categories below—that provide real, practical support to every learner.

When we treat support as something we actively build into our classrooms, inclusion moves from a goal to a daily reality.

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ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

- **Arrange** seating to reduce distractions (e.g., flexible seating, preferential placement).
- **Provide** access to quiet zones, calming corners, or sensory retreats.
- **Modify** lighting or allow natural lighting.
- **Reduce** or buffer visual, auditory, or movement-based distractions.
- **Post** visual schedules, cues, and reminders prominently.
- **Use** sensory-friendly tools (fidgets, weighted items, noise-canceling headphones).
- **Allow** movement options (standing desks, pacing space, wobble stools).
- **Create** personalized spaces (e.g., picture labels, comfort objects).
- **Design** consistent room layouts that support routine and orientation.
- **Offer** visual boundaries or dividers to create focus zones.

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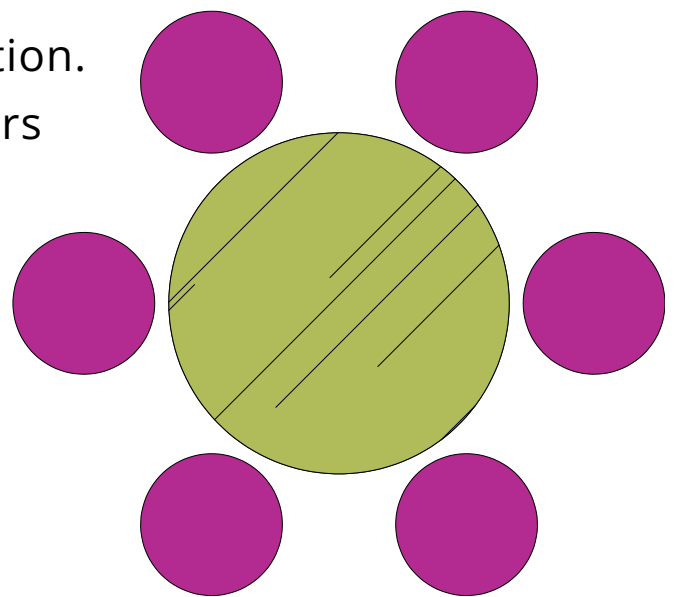
INSTRUCTIONAL PACING & DELIVERY

- **Extend** time for tasks, assignments, and assessments.
- **Break down** large tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- **Allow** frequent and flexible breaks.
- **Provide** pacing choices (early start, alternative due dates).
- **Repeat** and rephrase instructions as needed.
- **Use** visual timers and countdowns for transitions.
- **Embed** physical movement into instruction or content delivery.
- **Preview** content before full-class instruction.
- **Signal** transitions with nonverbal cues or chimes.
- **Offer** flexible grouping to revisit material with peers or adults.
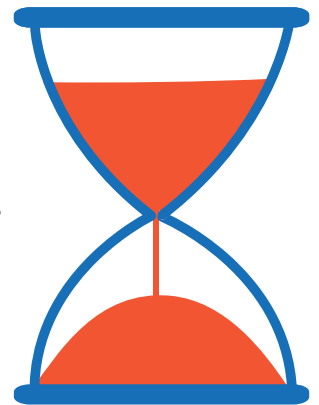
PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

- **Teach** using multiple modalities: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile.
- **Offer** visuals, charts, concept maps, and illustrated steps.
- **Pre-teach** vocabulary and key background information.
- **Use** color-coding and highlighting for key ideas.
- **Provide** graphic organizers, sentence frames, and templates.
- **Demonstrate** concepts using models and manipulatives.
- **Summarize** and recap lessons with visuals or audio.
- **Incorporate** real-world examples and storytelling.
- **Allow** students to choose preferred content formats (e.g., video vs. article).
- **Use** culturally relevant and relatable instructional materials.

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MATERIALS & ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- **Offer** audiobooks, podcasts, and screen readers.
- **Use** digital organizers, apps, and calendars.
- **Allow** alternative writing inputs (e.g., voice typing, click-select).
- **Provide** adapted print materials (e.g., enlarged font, Braille).
- **Ensure** access to devices or AT tools throughout the day.
- **Highlight** or annotate important text beforehand.
- **Embed** icons or visuals into written instructions.
- **Teach** how to navigate and personalize tech supports.
- **Support** low-tech alternatives like slant boards and pencil grips.
- **Display** step-by-step guides on tech tools for independence.
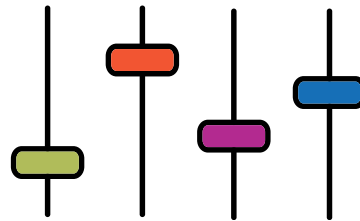
ASSIGNMENT ADAPTATIONS

- **Shorten** assignments while maintaining learning goals.
- **Allow** choice in output (e.g., video, drawing, slideshow).
- **Provide** scaffolded or partially completed versions.
- **Rephrase** instructions into visual or sequential formats.
- **Create** open-ended or multi-modal options for responses.
- **Permit** oral or scribed responses.
- **Include** visual instructions or task cards.
- **Use** fill-in-the-blank formats or guided notes.
- **Eliminate** repetitive or non-essential sections.
- **Adapt** assignments to match student interests or strengths.

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SOCIAL INTERACTION SUPPORTS

- **Pair** students strategically to support positive interactions.
- **Teach** scripts for common social exchanges.
- **Facilitate** daily peer greetings or check-ins.
- **Rotate** classroom jobs to build community.
- **Create** buddy systems or peer mentors.
- **Support** group roles with visuals and prompts.
- **Use** games to practice social-emotional skills.
- **Role-play** scenarios with direct feedback.
- **Design** inclusive opportunities during nonacademic time.
- **Incorporate** digital communication supports as needed.

SELF-MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- **Create** visual schedules with words and images.
- **Offer** daily or weekly planners.
- **Use** checklists for routines and assignments.
- **Include** tools for emotional regulation (e.g., zones, mood meters).
- **Teach** and reinforce goal-setting strategies.
- **Use** timers or countdowns to structure tasks.
- **Embed** reinforcement for self-monitoring.
- **Color-code** materials by subject or task.
- **Model** self-reflection with journals or quick prompts.
- **Practice** task initiation and follow-through with coaching.

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TESTING ADAPTATIONS

- **Read** test questions aloud or use audio support.
- **Offer** tests in varied formats (oral, visual, project-based).
- **Provide** breaks or chunked timeframes.
- **Allow** open book, calculator, or cheat sheets.
- **Extend** time limits or remove them entirely.
- **Administer** tests one-on-one or in smaller settings.
- **Reword** complex test directions or prompts.
- **Permit** verbal responses, scribing, or typing.
- **Use** portfolios, rubrics, or demonstrations of mastery.
- **Allow** retakes or revisions for growth tracking.

COGNITIVE SUPPORTS & EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- **Provide** visual reminders and task cards.
- **Use** color-coded steps for multi-stage tasks.
- **Offer** memory aids like mnemonics and checklists.
- **Reinforce** strategies like chunking and visual mapping.
- **Model** metacognition through self-talk and "think alouds."
- **Break** work into time-based segments with movement built in.
- **Post** key questions or prompts students can refer to.
- **Teach** organizational skills explicitly with daily practice.
- **Use** routine reflection questions to support generalization.
- **Link** strategies to goals so students understand their purpose.

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PREDICTABILITY & EMOTIONAL SAFETY

- **Post** agendas and preview any changes.
- **Use** countdowns or "first/then" language.
- **Allow** students to check in on their regulation needs.
- **Create** consistent start/end of day routines.
- **Offer** visual supports for transitions.
- **Develop** individualized calm-down plans or toolkits.
- **Teach** self-regulation strategies during calm moments.
- **Use** "feelings charts" or zones to promote awareness.
- **Offer** safe spaces where students can reset.
- **Normalize** taking breaks and returning to learning.

BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS & POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- **Co-create** agreements or behavior contracts.
- **Use** subtle cues to redirect before escalation.
- **Embed** authentic choices to promote ownership.
- **Celebrate** growth and small wins regularly.
- **Implement** restorative practices for accountability.
- **Offer** "Do Nows" to build early success in a lesson.
- **Use** positive narration to reinforce expectations.
- **Create** behavior support visuals (e.g., reminders, trackers).
- **Provide** opportunities for leadership and responsibility.
- **Track** data to identify patterns and triggers.

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CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC RESPONSIVENESS

- **Honor** students' home language in signs and materials.
- **Use** examples from diverse cultures and traditions.
- **Invite** families to contribute ideas, practices, or goals.
- **Translate** key documents and visual tools.
- **Validate** communication norms from different backgrounds.
- **Adapt** curriculum to reflect multiple perspectives.
- **Include** students' identities in stories and examples.
- **Celebrate** cultural holidays and traditions inclusively.
- **Encourage** bilingual learning supports.
- **Build** cultural competence among staff and peers.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

- **Send** home visuals, strategies, or routine outlines.
- **Create** communication logs for ongoing updates.
- **Invite** family insights about what works best at home.
- **Offer** office hours or open lines for questions.
- **Use** digital tools (e.g., Remind, ClassDojo, Google Docs).
- **Translate** communications and resources as needed.
- **Share** photos or videos of successful strategies.
- **Include** family voices in student goal setting.
- **Provide** access to training and learning resources.
- **Celebrate** family involvement in school events.

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