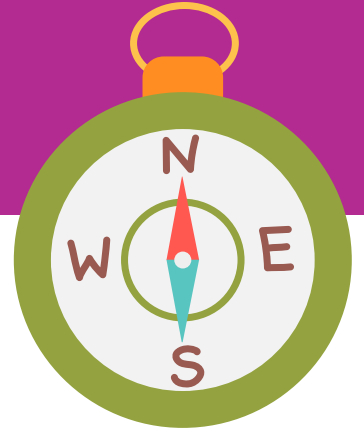


# THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION COMPASS

*Move From Vision to Action*



Like a compass, these three guideposts help us navigate the work of inclusion: mindset sets our direction, heartset fuels our purpose, and skillset moves us forward with action.

## MINDSET

What We Believe: The ability to reimagine systems of belonging and reject practices that segregate and separate

- **Core Values** – Your unwavering commitment to dignity, equity, and belonging.
- **Courageous Convictions** – This speaks to the deeply held beliefs that drive actions. The bravery to challenge the status quo and act in alignment with inclusive beliefs.
- **Comfort Zone** – A reminder that inclusion asks us to stretch, grow, unlearn, and question systems of oppression and ableism.

## HEARTSET

What We Feel: The emotions and relationships that sustain inclusive actions

- **Community** – The emotional pull of belonging and shared purpose. Leading with love, care, and understanding across differences.
- **Compassion** – The emotional intelligence to see and respond to others' needs with kindness. Prioritizing relationships with students, families, and colleagues.
- **Connection** – A felt sense of being seen, heard, and valued. Reflects the emotional interdependence necessary to sustain inclusive practices.

## SKILLSET

What We Do: The capabilities we need to design, deliver, and sustain inclusive practices

- **Competence** – Practical know-how in inclusive practices. The self-efficacy to actually try new things, even when there's pushback.
- **Creativity** – How to design authentic, joyful, and meaningful learning experiences.
- **Collaboration** – Skillfully working across roles to build inclusive systems with others.

**Here's how to use the Mindset-Heartset-Skillset compass to put your inclusive education definition into practice:**

### 1. ANCHOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Use as a reflective framework for PD:

- Start every session by identifying whether you're addressing a mindset, heartset, or skillset.
- Invite staff to identify which area they most need to grow in—and build differentiated supports around it.

*Example:* "Today's focus on co-teaching strategies taps into the skillset. But let's ground it in our mindset: that every child belongs in the general education classroom."

## 2. AUDIT SCHOOL CULTURE & SYSTEMS

Have your leadership team use the framework as a lens for walkthroughs, IEP reviews, or equity audits:

- Mindset: Are practices reinforcing beliefs of deficit or strength?
- Heartset: Do students and staff feel seen, safe, and connected?
- Skillset: Are educators equipped and supported to deliver inclusive practices?

*Example:* During a walkthrough, ask: “Are we seeing collaboration, or isolation? Are kids working in groups that reflect their full diversity, or tracked by perceived ability?”

## 3. GUIDE GOAL-SETTING AND EVALUATION

Use the three C-words from each set to define success in concrete, observable ways. For example:

### MINDSET



Staff express shared values of equity and belonging; policies reflect inclusive assumptions.

### HEARTSET



Strong family partnerships; positive behavior supports rooted in relationship and trust.

### SKILLSET



Lesson plans show differentiation; teachers co-plan and co-teach; all students access core content.

#### 4. CULTIVATE A SHARED LANGUAGE

Integrate the terms "mindset, heartset, and skillset" into everyday school conversations, coaching feedback, and newsletters. It becomes a shorthand that keeps your vision alive.

*Example* for staff meeting: "This is a heartset challenge. We know the skill is there—but how can we build more connection and care among the team so they're willing to try?"

#### 5. ENCOURAGE AND GUIDE INTROSPECTION AND REFLECTION

##### MINDSET – WHAT WE BELIEVE



- What do we believe about students, learning, and difference?
- Are our current practices grounded in beliefs of inclusion or exclusion?
- Do our policies reflect a commitment to belonging, equity, and dignity?

##### HEARTSET – WHAT WE FEEL



- How do we feel and connect with others in this work?
- Do our students and staff feel seen, heard, and valued?
- Are we building strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues, and students?

##### SKILLSET – WHAT WE DO



- What must we know and do to enact inclusion every day?
- Do educators have the tools, support, and confidence they need?
- Are we designing learning that is joyful, authentic, and accessible to all?

# ADDITIONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION PROMPTS FOR LEADERS

Use these in team meetings, PLCs, or coaching check-ins:

- Which area—mindset, heartset, or skillset—do we personally need to grow in right now?
- Which area is most needed in our school or district at this moment?
- How does this professional development session support mindset, heartset, or skillset?
- Are we seeing collaboration or isolation in classrooms?
- Are children being grouped by inclusion or by perceived ability?
- What inclusive actions are we celebrating—and what gaps remain?
- How do we define success for inclusive education in observable, everyday terms?
- How are we reinforcing our core values in our daily interactions and decisions?
- Where are our staff feeling stuck, and which of the three sets might unlock momentum?

