



Inclusive Learning Communities Practice Profile

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Introduction

The Inclusive Learning Communities (ILC) Practice Profile describes the essential attributes of a learning environment that is inclusive of each and every learner. Outlining five core competencies, this practice profile document aims to provide both educators and leaders a framework to promote and support inclusive classrooms, schools, and programs. The core competencies include:

- Professional Collaboration Among Learner Supports
- Inclusive Mindsets
- Learning Culture, Climate and Relationships
- Planning and Facilitation
- Authentic Learner Engagement

The ILC serves as a starting point for practitioners to examine their practice and to implement change at a classroom and school level. Educators at every level may find practical use of this tool in multiple ways, including:

- Informing practice of educators. As educators build reflection into their daily practice, this tool can help identify areas of strength and needs for teachers, and also promote goal setting in a specific competency.
- Professional development of educators. As leaders work to build co-teaching teams, this tool can serve as a basis for developing a shared vision of inclusive practice among a district, school or team.
- Training and coaching of educators. As educators and coaches work with preservice teachers or new hires, this framework can build an understanding of inclusive practice and building expectations. Furthermore, this tool can cast a wide net to align colleagues, including support services, to a vision or mission (e.g. guidance, social work, paraprofessionals, psychologist, etc.).
- Building-wide audit. As buildings and districts look to quantify the degree of inclusive practices, this tool can be used to audit current practices and to inform system change.

Glossary of Terms

Co-Serving is the practice in which educators collaborate, consult, co-plan, and reflect to meet needs of all learners. All educators are responsible for all learners.

Co-Teaching is the practice in which two licensed educators, often a special education teacher and a general education teacher, share equal responsibility for planning, delivering, evaluating instruction, and learning to meet the diverse needs of students in a shared space.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy means incorporating awareness in our teaching about the daily realities and identities of young people we teach.

Definition of age ranges: early childhood students are defined as young learners, while students aged 18-21 are defined as transitional learners.

Educational equity means that every learner has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income.

Educators are school personnel, including all teachers, building administrators, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, librarians, and learner services personnel (e.g. social work, school psychology, guidance).

Learner Agency is evidenced through learners' engagement in their own learning through voice, choice, and reflection.

Pathways:

A **learner profile** describes the way a learner learns best, including interests, strengths, and opportunities for growth. It can also include academic, social, and emotional goals. This is often co-created with a teacher.

An **individualized learning plan (ILP)**, often based on a learner's profile, creates a path for learners to follow to reach learning targets. This creates a specific plan for each learner to develop and implement academic, social, or emotional goals.

Learner goals are specific objectives learners are working towards meeting. These can include academic, social, behavioral, and emotional goals.

An **individualized education program (IEP)** is the yearlong collaborative plan developed by a team, including the learner and their family, along with general and special education teachers, administrators, and learner services personnel. The IEP indicates the child's annual goals and specifies the special education and related services that the child will receive.

Proportional Representation in Special Education means that learners from non-dominant groups are referred and identified at proportional rates to learners representing dominant groups.

Specially Designed Instruction: Special Education includes specially designed instruction, related services, supplementary aids and services, and program modifications and supports to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability. Other learners may also benefit from specially designed instruction that meets their unique needs.

A **stakeholder** is an individual or a group invested in learner's academic, social, and emotional life. Stakeholders can include families, teachers, school administrators, staff members, and community members. Stakeholders' ideas and input are evident in the implementation of inclusive learning communities.

Inclusive Learning Communities Competencies At-A-Glance

1. Professional Collaboration Among Learner Supports
 - 1a. Inclusive Learner-Centered Practices Vision
 - 1b. Co-Planning and Co-Serving
 - 1c. Conflict Resolution
2. Inclusive Mindsets
 - 2a. Employing Equitable Practices
 - 2b. Activating Learner Agency and Voice
 - 2c. Capitalizing on Behaviors and Mistakes
 - 2d. Creating a Community of Learner
3. Learning Climate, Culture, and Relationships
 - 3a. Designing Physical Space and Classroom Structure
 - 3b. Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being of All Learners
 - 3c. Facilitating Inclusive, Asset-Building Language
4. Planning and Facilitation
 - 4a. Planning Learning Experiences for All Learners

- 4b. Co-Creating Individual Learning Plans
- 4c. Targeted, Individualized Assessment and Feedback
- 5. Authentic Learner Engagement
 - 5a. Establishing Positive Educator-Learner Relationships
 - 5b. Supporting Learner Leadership Opportunities
 - 5c. Developing Learner Success Criteria
 - 5d. Promoting and Supporting Self-Awareness of Learner Disposition

1 Professional Collaboration Among Learner Supports

Contribution to Systems Transformation

When the implementation team shares an inclusive learner-centered vision, it allows for equitable and inclusive learning environments, which promote learning and achievement.

1a Inclusive Learner-Centered Practice Vision

Expected Use in Practice

- An articulated mission or vision, co-created with families, is evident around inclusive practices.
- School support partnerships and structures exist and are clearly articulated in the mission document (i.e. Student Support Teams, Problem Solving Teams, Intervention Teams).
- The mission and vision documents are visible, available to all stakeholders, and express processes for meeting each and every learners' goals and needs.
- District policies and funding reflect and support the mission and vision of ILC.
- Families are represented and have a voice on district and school committees.

Developmental Use in Practice

- There is inconsistent evidence of a shared mission and vision or the mission or vision were not co-created with families.
- Limited evidence that school support partnerships and structures are articulated and exist as a foundation for all learners.
- The mission and vision documents are available to some but not all stakeholders and learner goals and needs are not specifically addressed.
- District policy and funding reflect attempts to support the mission and vision of ILC.
- There is limited or inconsistent representation of families on district and school committees.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Tension between multiple philosophies creates confusion.
- Educators do not work in team structures or existing school support teams and structures are siloed.
- The lack of aligned mission and vision shifts the focus away from the goals or needs of the learner.
- Policy and funding perpetuate segregation.

1b Co-Planning and Co-Serving

Expected Use in Practice

- All educators are responsible for all learners.
- Educators develop the structures (e.g., schedules, time allowed for planning) that allow collaboration with all school support.
- Educator teams intentionally foster cooperation and collaboration between school support services staff, families, and community around learner pathways.
- Educators develop a quantitative and qualitative data-sharing system to plan, monitor, adjust, and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning strategies, including interventions.
- Educators routinely leverage learners' strengths and support their needs when planning and implementing learner pathways.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Not all educators consistently demonstrate responsibility for all learners.
- There are limited structures (e.g., schedules, time allowed for planning) that allow collaboration with school supports.
- There is lack of evidence that educators intentionally act as team members to foster cooperation and collaboration between school support services staff, families, and community.
- Educators inconsistently use data for decision-making purposes to plan, monitor, adjust, and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning strategies, including interventions.
- Educators intermittently leverage learners' strengths and support their needs when planning and implementing learner pathways.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Distinct divisions of labor exist as evidenced by the "your kids/my kids" perspective.
- Structures discourage or prevent collaboration with school supports.
- Educators work independently around learner needs.
- Data systems are used to perpetuate the segregation or marginalization of learners.
- Learners' strengths and needs, including implementation of IEP and 504 plans, are not considered in planning.

1c **Conflict Resolution**

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators view conflict as an opportunity to create solutions, a way to build relationships, and a way to develop agency in staff, learners, families, and community.
- Districts make sure that families know that there is a conflict resolution process.
- Educators are aware of power differential and consider whose voices are heard and whose are not (e.g., reflect on who is benefiting and who is not, maintain confidentiality).

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators use staff-directed strategies to resolve conflict and repair relationships.
- Districts involve families inconsistently in the conflict resolution process.
- Educators lack confidence and the repertoire to meet the needs of learners during conflict situations, especially as it pertains to power differentials.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educators insist on learners following unilateral rules during conflict situations. Educators avoid conflict or resolve conflict unproductively (e.g., without engaging learners or other stakeholders in conflict resolution).
- Districts use the conflict resolution process inequitably.
- During conflict, unilateral power differentials are reinforced and perpetuated.

2 Inclusive Mindsets

Contribution to Systems Transformation

In an inclusive, learner-centered environment, educators believe that all learners can and will succeed and provide opportunities to find the expert learner in every child. By focusing on self-awareness and community-building, the team is able to highlight individual strengths of the learner and the community so that each member is essential to the success of the whole.

2a Employing Equitable Practices

Expected Use in Practice

- Learning materials and experiences represent the familial, cultural, and linguistic background of each and every learner.
- Educators and learners co-create Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) with ambitious and achievable goals that represent each learner's academic, social, emotional, and physical strengths, interests, and needs.
- All interactions between learners and stakeholders demonstrate that each and every learner is valuable, unique, and able to succeed.
- Family partnerships are embedded in system policies and procedures to ensure an environment where every family's culture is welcomed, honored, and integrated into the learning community.
- Educators analyze comprehensive data to ensure proportional representation of each and every learner across environments.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Learning materials and experiences inconsistently or superficially represent the familial, cultural, and linguistic background of each and every learner.
- Educators use a template to develop uniform ILPs that simplify each learner's strengths, interests, and needs.
- Interactions between learners and stakeholders inconsistently demonstrate that learners are valuable, unique, and able to succeed.
- Family input is collected but does not always affect system policies and procedures.
- Educators use limited data points when determining proportional representation in learning environments.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Learning materials and experiences perpetuate the dominant culture.
- Educators are unaware of or disregard the individual learning needs of learners.
- Learner-to-learner and educator-to-learner relationships are friendly, but patronizing or even antagonizing.
- Families are not valued or included as partners; system policies and procedures are created without their input.
- Educators use data to develop classroom compositions that benefit the educators or administration.

2b **Activating Learner Agency and Voice**

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators ensure learners have a true and authentic voice in their learning as they plan goals, access instruction, and determine means of assessment.
- Learners frequently give meaningful input on classroom products and processes. Educators and learners discuss how choices affect learning.
- With guidance and practice, learners co-create a timeline, purpose for, and evidence of learning.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Learner voice and input is invited, but not ensured, often with the educator's agenda and comfort level at the forefront.
- Learner choices that are less productive result in educator take-back of control.
- Learners have some flexibility in making daily choices on content, products, or processes within educator established parameters.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Learner voice is absent or superficial and accepted on a conditional basis (performance and/or behavior).
- Educators create assignment expectations without input from learners. Compliance or performance is often mistaken for engagement.
- Learners do not have choice in content, products, or processes. They are expected to be compliant with educator and system demands.

2c **Capitalizing on Behaviors and Mistakes**

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators understand and respond to behavior as a form of communication.
- Educators and learners understand mistakes as a process for continued growth.
- Learners reflect on mistakes to build self-awareness and pursue growth.
- Educators apply their knowledge of culturally sustaining pedagogy to consider behavioral, social, and emotional experiences through multiple lenses.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators help learners work through mistakes or problems as opportunities for growth, but continue to think about consequences to deter them from happening again.
- Educators usually facilitate learner understanding of and reflection on behaviors as an opportunity for continued growth and self-awareness.
- Learners rely on adults to collaboratively process their mistakes as growth opportunities.
- Educators apply a developing knowledge of culturally sustaining pedagogy to consider behavioral, social, and emotional experiences.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educators see and react to behaviors as scary, detrimental to learning and the learning of others, and needing of punishments.
- Educators focus on punishment rather than the problem. They blame and label learners for misbehavior.
- Learners rely on external feedback.
- Educators perpetuate social and cultural inequities when addressing behavioral, social, and emotional experiences.

2d Creating a Community of Learners

Expected Use in Practice

- Community-building experiences are ongoing and intentionally designed to foster learner agency, advocacy, and a sense of belonging.
- Educators facilitate community building through learning experiences, conversations, mutual mentorship opportunities, and problem solving strategies.
- Stakeholders engage each member as essential to the success of the whole, as evidenced by respectful communication and rapport.

Developmental Use in Practice

- At the beginning of the school year or semester, some time is set aside for community-building.
- Demands of pacing and curriculum take the place of depth and longevity in establishing a community of learners.
- Educators direct the engagement of stakeholders to build the learning community.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- No sense of community exists in the classroom.
- The curriculum positions learners as individuals in competition with one another, and in a hierarchical relationship based on performance, behavior, or perspective of the educator.
- Stakeholders are not engaged in the learning community.

3 Learning Climate, Culture, and Relationships

Contribution to Systems Transformation

When an environment is intentionally designed and facilitated to support a learner's social and emotional health and promotes positive language and authentic relationships, together it develops a sense of trust, safety, and belonging. A strong culture and a climate of collaboration create high expectations for the learning of all students.

3a Designing Physical Space and Classroom Structure

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators intentionally design the physical learning spaces (e.g., equipment, materials, space, and arrangement) based on an understanding of learner variability. The environment provides accessibility and flexibility for academic, physical, social, and emotional learning.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators design a classroom structure to promote and prepare for learning activities, while keeping classroom management strategies in mind.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Physical design or learning space reflects educator as the learning and management authority, is static, prohibits or limits access to learning or reinforces dominant culture or learner ability level. Learners are placed disproportionately in learning environments based on ability, race, gender, social class, etc.

3b Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being of All Learners

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators facilitate and model empathy, understanding, and flexible thinking to foster an environment that supports trust, safety, empowerment, choice, collaboration, and belonging.
- Learners use empathy, understanding, and conflict resolution when engaging in peer-to-peer relationships.
- Educators use a variety of resources (e.g., visual supports, creative programs, family resources) to respond to and support learners' emotional needs and development.
- Educators consistently communicate clear expectations as a strategy for promoting positive social engagement with and among learners and families.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators strive to make learner connection, but under challenging circumstances, such as learner behavior or poor performance, the relationship becomes strained.
- Learners inconsistently use empathy, understanding, and conflict resolution when engaging in peer-to-peer relationships.
- Educators use a limited range of resources to respond to and support learners' emotional needs and development.
- Educators sometimes communicate expectations as a strategy for promoting positive social engagement with and among learners and families while keeping classroom management strategies in mind.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Social emotional needs are ignored or mistaken for disengagement, low performance, or non-compliance. Social emotional needs are seen as detrimental to growth and prohibitive of community. Learners are patronized or shamed.
- Learners do not exhibit empathy, understanding or conflict resolution when engaging with peers but rather are competitive or self-centered.
- Educators do not use resources or use resources that negatively affect learners' emotional and developmental needs.
- Expectations are not communicated, or the expectations are rule bound, punitive, inflexible, or applied differently to different learners.

3c Facilitating Inclusive, Asset-Building Language

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators' and learners' communication is purposeful, considerate, asset-based, and person-first.
- Educators and learners recognize and respond to communication that is verbal and nonverbal, whether positive or negative.
- Educators and learners communicate through various modes (e.g., verbal, written, graphic) to extend thinking and focus on understanding.
- Educators, learners, and families intentionally and consistently use a variety of culturally and linguistically responsive communications.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators and learners sometimes use asset-based and person-first language.
- Educators inconsistently respond to verbal or nonverbal communication and only affirm positive communication.
- Various communication modes are present but are inconsistently or superficially used to extend thinking or focus on understanding.
- Educators inconsistently use culturally and linguistically responsive communication methods.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educator or learner language is used to assert power and authority.
- Educators' or other learners' language denigrates, controls, and manipulates others. Sarcasm is used as a tool for communicating.
- Educators focus on arriving at the right answer and do not value communicating the thinking process.
- Only dominant communication styles are valued or recognized.

4 Planning and Facilitation

Contribution to Systems Transformation

When educators facilitate inclusive learner-centered environments, learner efficacy, engagement, and self-regulation increase, contributing to mastery of content standards. Collaborative planning between educators and learners to develop Individualized Learner Plans (ILP) promotes self-directed learning, ownership, and agency for meeting learning targets.

4a Planning Learning Experiences for All Learners

Expected Use in Practice

Educators intentionally use a wide range of strategies to plan learner-centered experiences. Learner-centered experiences are characterized by:

- thoughtful use of strategies including learner groupings, choice of modalities, and instructional tools, and use of technology;
- variation in timing and pacing of learning content;
- co-creation by educator and learners while maintaining academic rigor; and
- a focus on learners' lived experiences and cultural histories.

Developmental Use in Practice

Educators intentionally use strategies to plan learner-centered experiences. Learner-centered experiences are characterized by:

- a limited variation in strategies;
- the expectation of learners to move through curriculum at largely the same pace and time frames;
- a focus on academic rigor at the expense of self-directed learning, ownership, and agency; and
- social, cultural, or lived experiences are represented in limited ways.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

Instruction is educator driven and does not reflect the individual needs of learners. Learning experiences are characterized by:

- a lack of variation in strategies;
- the educator's expectations that all learners move through curriculum at the same pace or with rigid time parameters;
- a focus on developing curriculum that maintains the historical power structure; and
- curriculum that does not represent learners' social, cultural, or lived experiences.

4b Co-Creating Individual Learning Plans

Expected Use in Practice

- Each and every learner collaborates with educators and other appropriate stakeholders to create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). ILP-focused growth areas are aligned to IEP goals.
- Educators and learners use the learner's interests, strengths, and talents as a starting point when creating goals to help learners understand, develop, and communicate their choices and interests.
- Educators embed a continuum of supports into each learner's experience.
- Learners and families are equal partners in the IEP process.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Learners have learning profiles and are working to develop goals in response. ILP-focused growth areas may lack alignment with IEP goals.
- There is limited evidence that learners' interests and strengths are included in instructional and individual plans.
- Educators use a limited range of embedded supports.
- Learners and families are involved in the IEP process.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are absent or not truly individualized. Individual Education Plans (IEP) are disconnected and unrelated to ILPs.
- Learner interests, strengths, and talents are not considered or included in any plans.
- Supports are very limited, stigmatizing, and negatively affect learner connection to other peers and learning opportunities.
- Learners and families are not aware of IEP goals. Barriers to participation in the IEP process are not addressed.

4c Targeted, Individualized Assessment and Feedback

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators provide multiple opportunities to practice skills and develop learner traits so that learners are able to decide what mode works best for them.
- Educators use assessments that:
 - reflect multiple avenues for learners to demonstrate learning;
 - are personalized;
 - include diagnostic items intended to adjust the level and type of scaffolding needed;
 - are integrated into the learning to demonstrate understanding and growth;
 - always include feedback, whether formative, benchmark or summative; and
 - include learner reflection and goal setting (e.g. often co-created by learners).
- Educators provide families with assessment information about their children (e.g., include interpretation of results, answers to their questions, suggestions for home support, etc.)
- Learners receive ongoing, consistent, supportive, sensitive, and meaningful feedback from educators and peers based on both skill development and learner traits.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators provide a small range of options for practicing skills and developing learner traits.
- Educators use limited assessment avenues for learners to demonstrate learning. Assessment choices are:
 - created by educators;
 - lacking personalization;
 - not developed with intent to inform level and type of scaffolding;
 - not always integrated, as learning sometimes stops in order to assess;
 - not always accompanied by feedback; and
 - open to limited opportunities for learner reflection or goal setting.
- Educators provide families with limited assessment information.
- Learners receive consistent, targeted feedback solely from educators through periodic discussions based on skills development articulated in ILPs and IEPs.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educators dictate the mode that learners will use.
- Educators use assessments in a way that breeds competition (e.g., via comparison). Assessment choices are:
 - solely created and evaluated by educators;
 - ritualistic or limited to standardized assessment measures;
 - completely separated from learning;
 - summative without feedback to the learner; and
 - not connected to learner reflection or goal setting.
- Feedback is limited to required formal measures, such as report cards and IEP updates, or generic communication to families.
- Learners do not receive meaningful feedback from educators or peers.

5 Authentic Learner Engagement

Contribution to Systems Transformation

When educators consistently ensure authentic learner engagement, learner development and outcomes improve.

5a Establishing Positive Educator-Learner Relationships

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators and each and every learner:
 - celebrate engagement and learning,
 - ask deep questions,
 - engage each other in conversations about learning, and
 - reflect on and process instructional conversations.
- Educators engage each and every learner's family:
 - in deep conversations about how and what learners are learning,
 - by sharing strategies for growth, and
 - in discussing what is presently being done in the classroom and other learning environments.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators show some—but limited—intentional interest to engage learners in deep conversations (e.g., about their successes, instructional conversations).
- Educators are communicating with families without intentionally engaging them in deep conversations about their children's growth and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom and other learner environments.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educators promote compliance through:
 - rewards or praise,
 - punishment and threats, and
 - teacher directed, one-way instructions.
- Educators' relationships with families and learners are conditional, based on behavior and performance.

5b Supporting Learner Leadership Opportunities

Expected Use in Practice

- Leadership roles in decision-making groups at the school and in community settings are equitably representative of all learners and their families.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Opportunities are available to all learners to participate in class-wide, school-wide, or community-based leadership groups.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Leadership roles are held solely by members of the dominant group.

5c **Developing Learner Success Criteria**

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators partner with families, peers, and advocates to facilitate:
 - learner self-awareness of academic and social emotional strengths,
 - areas of growth, and
 - strategies and resources needed to be successful learners.
- Learners are able to self-monitor and identify strengths and areas targeted for further growth and development, and share those with educators and families

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators inconsistently facilitate opportunities for learners to reflect on their academic and social-emotional strengths, areas of growth, strategies and resources.
- Formal and informal communication from educators to families encourages learners to self-monitor and identify strengths and areas targeted for further growth and development.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Educator blames learner for lack of awareness about their strengths and weaknesses.
- Feedback on learner disposition and engagement is only given through required formal measures, such as report cards, IEPs, or communication home.

5d **Promoting and Supporting Self-Awareness of Learner Disposition**

Expected Use in Practice

- Educators guide individual learners or the class in developing success criteria for a given task or learning activity.
- Educators support learners to find and use appropriate learning and communication tools to meet goals.
- Learners collaborate with others (e.g., peers, family members, advocates) based on needs and interests.

Developmental Use in Practice

- Educators sometimes develop universal success criteria for a given task or learning activity for all learners.
- Educators provide limited options to learners for learning and communication tools.
- Opportunities for learners to collaborate with family members, peers, and community advocates based on needs and interests are limited.

Unacceptable Use in Practice

- Success criteria is built solely by the educator and is focused around learners earning a specific grade or score.
- Educators prescribe how achievement of goals will be communicated.
- Learners and families are unclear of learning targets, goals, or expected outcomes.

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