

Strategies for Diverse Learners Using the UDL Model Focus on Students with Disabilities

General Guidelines

- Students can be identified with one of 13 different disability conditions in Ohio; however, there is significant diversity both between and within these disability conditions. Eighty percent of students with disabilities do not have general cognitive performance deficits as a feature of their disabilities.
- Consult with the student's intervention specialist to review the student's strengths and instructional needs as outlined in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and to determine the most effective ways to support the student in the classroom.
- Ensure that students with disabilities are receiving instruction based on grade-level content standards while also providing the necessary instructional supports and accommodations that will allow them to demonstrate their knowledge. For some students with significant cognitive disabilities, the standards may need to be extended or adjusted but these adjustments should still align with the goals of Ohio's revised standards.
- *Twice Exceptional* students are students identified as gifted who also have a disability condition. To meet the unique needs of a Twice Exceptional student, it is important for the classroom teacher to consult with both the student's intervention specialist and the gifted intervention specialist or coordinator to design the most appropriate instruction for the student. Learning experiences for Twice Exceptional students should address the student's disability and provide enhanced learning experiences in the student's areas of strength.
- Make use of technology and digital media to reduce barriers to learning, enhance instruction and provide additional methods for students with disabilities to demonstrate knowledge and skills. The purposeful use of technology is an essential component of college and career readiness for all students, including students with disabilities.

Multiple Means of Representation for Students with Disabilities

To provide students various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.

Examples:

- Present information using a rich mix of media in addition to text, such as video, digital books, audio, data displays, simulations and concept maps.
- The use of technology can improve instruction for many students, including those technologies that have been designed to assist students with specific disability conditions.
 - o Students with hearing impairments often benefit from closed captioning, automated speech-to-text applications, visual symbols and electronic sign-language dictionaries.
 - o Closed captioning is beneficial for students with reading disabilities, students with attention deficits and students who have difficulty filtering out background noise.

- o Students with visual impairments often benefit from non-visual alternatives such as Braille, tactile graphics, physical models and screen readers that use synthesized speech to “speak” graphics and text aloud. Students with low vision can benefit from visual display options such as screen magnification and the ability to adjust font size and contrast values of text to background.
- o Due to deficits in reading fluency, students with reading disabilities, including dyslexia, often experience difficulty reading the large amount of text required for each course. As a result, they can benefit from supports such as textbooks on tape, video, audio, text-to-speech technology and additional time to complete assignments.
- Use both linguistic and non-linguistic methods to represent key vocabulary, labels, symbols and icons to support comprehension of concepts.
- Assist students with disabilities in identifying key ideas and critical information with tools such as graphic organizers, outlines and concept maps.
- Providing additional teacher support until a student can apply new skills independently, often referred to as scaffolding, is an effective teaching strategy designed to shift responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student. Beginning instruction at a student’s current level of understanding and providing teacher support to assist the student in reaching the next level of mastery are particularly important for students with disabilities.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression

To provide options for demonstrating what students have learned.

Examples:

- For students with significant physical impairments that impact movement, such as cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy, work with the student’s intervention specialist to provide assistive technology that will ensure the curriculum is physically accessible to the student. Along with removing physical barriers within the school and classroom environment, students with physical impairments often benefit from pointing and typing aids, alternative keyboards, touch screens, and mobility and transportation aids.
- Provide multiple options for students to demonstrate knowledge and skills while maintaining the learning expectations of the grade-level content standards. The use of multiple media such as video, voiceover PowerPoint presentations, animations, visual art, photographs and storyboards can expand the opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of learning objectives. Many students who struggle with written expression are highly skilled at presenting their ideas orally.
- Many students with disabilities exhibit difficulty with writing, both the physical process of writing and the expression of ideas in a written format. These students may benefit from the use of portable word processors or composition tools that include features such as word prediction, text embedded prompts, auto correction and speech recognition programs that convert words spoken aloud to text.

Multiple Means of Engagement

To tap individual learners' interests, challenge them appropriately and motivate them to learn.

Examples:

- Provide choices to students whenever appropriate regarding how a learning objective can be achieved while still maintaining expectations aligned with grade-level content standards. Allowing students to pursue an area of interest can increase engagement in learning.
- Offer opportunities for students with disabilities to work in cooperative learning groups on authentic, project-based learning assignments and provide clear expectations for the group and each group member.
- Encourage students with disabilities to take ownership for their learning by assisting them in developing strategies for effective goal setting, reflection and self-monitoring of progress.
- Provide clear examples of expected products and give frequent constructive feedback to students with disabilities to encourage mastery of learning goals. Many students with disabilities lack confidence in their ability to succeed in school. Teacher feedback that recognizes improvement and emphasizes the importance of effort and persistence can be highly motivating.

Resources

- **Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Office for Exceptional Children,** <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>, keyword search: *Office for Exceptional Children*

ODE's *Office for Exceptional Children* (OEC) offers leadership, assistance and oversight to school districts and other entities that provide differentiated instruction for students with disabilities and gifted students. Information on OEC's comprehensive monitoring process to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) is provided as well as a description of the options available to resolve concerns regarding the identification, placement or education of students with disabilities.

- **EdResourcesOhio**, Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, <http://www.edresourcesohio.org>

EdResourcesOhio provides *Operating Standards for Ohio Educational Agencies Serving Children with Disabilities*, procedures and guidance to support the implementation of the Operating Standards, required forms, announcements of training and educational opportunities, and current and archived OEC newsletters. All IEPs developed for students with disabilities must be based on Ohio's academic content standards to ensure student access to and progress in the general education curriculum. An OEC training module, *Going Places with a Standards-Based IEP (GPS-IEP)*, is available to assist in developing standards-based IEPs.

- **Twice Exceptional Guide**, Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>, keyword search: *Twice Exceptional*

The *Twice Exceptional Guide* can assist educators and parents as they help gifted students with disabilities work toward their maximum potential. This guide offers information to help understand, recognize and meet the needs of these unique students by providing examples of challenging and appropriate instructional strategies and interventions. Case-study scenarios illustrate how to meet the dual needs of students identified as twice exceptional.

- **Ohio's State System of Support**, Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children and the Center for School Improvement, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>, keyword search: *Center for School Improvement*

Ohio has established State Support Teams (SSTs) in 16 regions of the state to work with districts to improve educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. SSTs provide professional development and technical assistance to assist districts, parents and related service personnel with issues related to compliance with IDEIA requirements. This website provides a map with SST contacts by region.

- **Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)**, Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, <http://www.ocali.org>

OCALI serves families, educators and professionals working with students with autism and low-incidence disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments and traumatic brain injuries. OCALI provides a wide variety of resources including a parent guide developed by Ohio parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorder, training modules, webinars, quarterly newsletters and a lending library for parents and professionals across the state of Ohio.