Continuum of Supports and Services

At many schools special education supports and services are delivered in a way that increases the capacity of general education teachers to successfully teach a more diverse population of students. Speech-language pathologists work with teachers to develop graphic organizers and visual tools for learning necessary for some students but beneficial to all students. Physical therapists work with physical education teachers to design games and sports that are naturally inclusive of students who have physical disabilities. Occupational therapists work with teachers to make modifications to environments and materials so that all students can participate. And special education and general education teachers design curriculum and instruction together right from the start so that accommodations and supports are naturally built into lessons.

- Related services are provided to enable students to participate in and benefit from the general education classroom curriculum and other inclusive activities.
- Special education staff works almost exclusively within the general education classroom as co-teachers, team-teachers, small group instructors, or one-on-one support teachers *for all students in the class*.
- Supports are unrelated to *programs* but are provided to individual students where and when they are needed.
- Students are provided with a means of communication all day long and other students and staff know how to use the device.
- Assistive technology is provided to promote learning, independence, and self-determination.

Student Supports within the Pyramid of Interventions - MHCBE

"A pyramid of intervention does not merely address learning outcomes for special education students; it integrates "special education" and "regular education" into simply "education". This brings together all staff to improve learning by delivering effective instruction and interventions to all students, without first waiting for them to fail. Adopting this approach is about using the best professional practice and insisting that we do what is best, necessary and right for all students – the right work at the right time." (Buffum, Mattos & Weber)

Specialized

Targeted

Universal
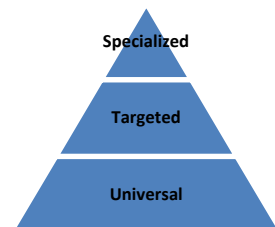
UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS **benefit all students**

This tier generally represents core instruction, addresses the needs of approximately 80-90% of students and contains accommodations and strategies that classroom teachers use to support struggling students. These interventions should be available to all students who need them and should be implemented within the general classroom framework. On an ongoing basis, teachers assess students to determine instructional strengths and needs.

Examples of universal supports include classroom instruction (including hands on curriculum and differentiated instruction), collaboration with learning coaches (including DI Coaches, Student Services Facilitators and Learning Assistant Teachers), use of sensory tools, whole class visual supports, parent volunteers and involvement, administrative support, use of Alberta Education resources and binders to guide practice, incorporating movement breaks and opportunities in to lessons, multi-sensory teaching, team teaching, PD opportunities, programs and classes that focus on building student strengths and talents, whole school character themes, service provider universal interventions (mental health, PT, OT, SLP, FMNI Teacher, ELL Lead Teacher, Psychologist…etc.), team meetings, environmental accommodations, extra-curricular activities (clubs, sports, the arts…etc.), technology, CTS labs, counselors.

Universal Interventions Include:
- Ongoing classroom assessment (running records, district reading assessment, phonological awareness literacy service, basic reading inventory, math boxes, writing rubrics…etc.)
- Variation in content, process and product in lesson planning
- Use of flexible grouping
- Respectful learning activities (engaging and appropriately challenging)
- Use of research based educational practices
- Proactive, school-wide approach to behavioural interventions
- Cultural responsiveness is part of core instructional programming
- Supplemental instructional materials are used when needed.
- Parent communication and involvement
- Understanding history of student strengths and areas of need
- Use classroom or grade-level volunteers to tutor small groups or individual students
- Collaboration with student services facilitator and administration related to instructional and behavioural strategies
- Meet with specialists (PE, music, art, technology, teacher librarian) for support and suggestions
- Cooperative learning and peer support strategies
- Classroom level "contracts for success" and/or goal-setting
- Implement meta-cognitive strategies throughout lessons
- Use district coaches to model lessons or help plan lessons using differentiation strategies

TARGETED SUPPORTS **benefit students with more specific needs**

This tier usually addresses the needs of 10 to 15% of students and contains supplemental supports that are reserved for students who have more significant challenges, weather academic, behavioural, or both. Tier 2 interventions often include assistance from specialists and activities such as tutoring or counseling.

Examples of Targeted Supports: Friendship and Social Skill Groups, use of strategies and supports through CHADS, use of strategies and supports through the FASD clinic, school facilitator collaboration, learning assistant support/intervention, behavior associate support/intervention, modifying lesson

delivery and interventions based on Level B assessments, parent link center, use of FMNI teacher, small group interventions, implementation of support plans, modifications and adaptations to lessons, assistive technology use, implementing supports outlined in IPP's, targeting goals outlines in IPPs, K&E programming, specialist targeted supports (Mental Health, OT, PT, SLP), literacy/math support or tutoring, implement behavior support plans, alternative spaces for learning and regulation.

Targeted Interventions Include:
- Utilize Student Services staff to supplement (not supplant) instruction through best practices (e.g., multisensory)
- Provide math and literacy intervention for those struggling with broad-based skills
- Flexible grouping
- Utilize trained volunteers to support small-groups or individuals in a variety of content areas
- Utilize literacy interventions for small-group instruction using best practices such as Balanced Literacy, Success Oriented Achievement Realized (SOAR) or Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).
- Provide or support summer school or tutoring opportunities
- See counselor/mental health on short-term basis
- Co-teaching configurations (special education and general education teacher collaboration)

SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS benefit the small number of students with sensory, physical, cognitive or behavioural needs that require intensive, individualized interventions

The top tier usually addresses the needs of students with significant academic or behavioural challenges who require more intensive services in a school. This may include individualized services in support spaces or the individualized use of related services.

Examples of Specialized Supports include use of specialized services (psychologists, OT, PT, SLP…etc.), Braille, sign language, addressing medical and basic care needs, case management, learning assistants, assistive technology, visual communication aides, behaviour associates, complex needs cases, physicians for medical diagnosis.

Specialized Interventions Include:
- Provide short-term one-on-one counseling with school social worker or psychologist
- Implement intensive behavior support plans based on functional behavioral assessment
- Implement one-on-one intervention/enrichment
- Use student/staff member buddy system where the student meets with the staff member weekly to check on student progress
- Student may be referred to Student Services team for consideration for testing
- Collaboration with outside therapists/medical personnel

Please keep in mind that many of the supports listed above can be applied to more than one level.

Supports for Learning
COACH 3: Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children: A Guide to Educational Planning for Children with Disabilities, **Michael F. Giangreco, Chigee J. Cloninger & Virginia S. Iverson, p 38**

Always remember… *"Only as special as necessary."* (Michael Giangreco)

Supports serve to allow access to, or participation in, the educational program. Unlike learning outcomes, which seek observable change in student behaviour, supports identify what other people need to do to assist the student. Supports are generally broad-based and cross-situational.

Supports can be addressed within the general education classroom setting when doing so is status neutral or, preferably, status enhancing. Conversely, some supports should be provided in private (e.g. dressing, health procedures). These private places need not be exclusively for students with disabilities, but could be places available for the same purposes for students who do not have disabilities. **It is critical not to subject students with disabilities to status-diminishing experiences.** We should not do things to or for students that might cause personal embarrassment, lack of personal dignity, or otherwise cause them to be perceived negatively. This should be true for any student, whether or not they have a disability label.

As stated in the Alberta Education Inclusive Education Planning Tool (IEPT), supports should be reviewed for effectiveness (effective, promising, not effective, not used) on a regular basis. Consider the following questions when you are evaluating the effectiveness of a universal, targeted or specialized support for an individual student or group of students.
- How often does the student make use of this support? Under what circumstances?
- Is this support transferable to other classes/grades/learning situations?
- How could this support contribute to the student's independence?
- How does this support affect the student's social interactions with others?
- How does this support affect other students in the classroom?
- Are there barriers to the effective use of this support? Specify.
- What can be done to address the barriers?
- How could this support be changed to better meet the needs of this student?

Supports can be provided in a variety of areas. The following is an incomplete list of areas of support as well as examples of support in those areas.

Personal Needs
- Assistance with personal hygiene
- Assistance with managing personal materials (lunch, backpack, locker…etc.)
- Help with the administration of medication

Physical Supports
- Provide physical support to the student's wrist as s/he uses an augmentative communication device
- Assist a student to manipulate the materials used to engage in an activity/produce the required product (art, music, cooking, tech ed)
- Guide a student's hand to adjust the focus on a microscope
- Take notes for a student as s/he listens to a lecture
- Ensure access to all learning environments

Emotional Supports
- Express confidence in a student's capabilities
- Acknowledge a student's feelings
- Praise a student's accomplishments

- Express genuine interest in a student's life
- Teach stress or anger management strategies

Sensory Supports
- Turn down the lights if a student is bothered by the lights
- Use background music to provide a soothing atmosphere
- Provide headphones or some other apparatus to block out noise
- Adjust the student's schedule to allow for activity or sensory breaks
- Have the student wear dark glasses in bright sunlight if student is bothered by the light
- Provide a different seat that gives sensory input (e.g., a seat with a bean-bag type cushion)
- Allow the student to use a "squeeze ball" to relieve tension
- Set up a schedule so that student has rigorous physical activity or quiet time throughout the day
- Provide some kind of touch – vigorous massage, brushing – prior to an activity or to assist in relaxation

Modified Materials and Assistive Technology for Learning
- Use the same materials but have students interact with only part of them (e.g., half the problems on a worksheet)
- Change the format of materials but keep the same general level of challenge (e.g., convert an assignment from essay to multiple choice or matching)
- Supplement the classroom materials by adding audio-visual media, models, manipulatives, etc.
- Substitute different materials (e.g., a synopsis of a book, chapter summaries, content-area reading materials at a different grade level)
- Provide technology (e.g., scan text or worksheets into the computer and manipulate them to enlarge, highlight, remove distractions, change how answers are entered; provide the student with an augmentative communication device to provide access to information, to promote full participation, and to provide a means for communicating understanding)
- Enhance materials: enlarging, putting fewer words on each page, creating borders or other visual supports, using colors, adding symbols or photos to text

  Examples of Modified Materials and Assistive Technology for Learning
  - Convert essay tests into: short answer, multiple choice, matching, fill in blanks, oral tests, demonstrations etc.
  - Provide reading materials on the same topic but at the student's reading level
  - Use NOVA, Discovery Channel, or Internet web site videos to supplement books or encyclopedias
  - Point to features of a model when giving an oral lecture about anatomy, geometry, cooking, geography
  - Use an instant picture camera to take photos of the steps of a lab experiment and paste them into the lab notebook along with brief descriptions of each step and student observations
  - Use computer software that reads text, has word prediction, enables spelling and grammar checks, provides graphic organizers for taking notes
  - Create customized worksheets in larger font, using color coding, blocking
  - Provide pictures, photographs, models, videotapes, etc. to supplement written text

Personalized Instruction
Like their classmates, students with a disability need to have teaching "personalized" for their learning style, level of knowledge, interests, and goals. Personalized instruction can take many forms:
- Asking different kinds of questions to different students
- Providing additional instructions or clarifying

- Providing instructional scaffolding (background information, graphic organizers, teach meta-cognitive skills, visual supports…etc.)
- Defining vocabulary
- Provide systematic instruction
- Breaking down tasks into manageable chunks
- Providing one-to-one tutorial on a specific skill or concept

  Examples of Personalized Instruction:
  - The classroom teacher asks each student a different kind of question. If some students are being asked "why?" questions such as "why did Boo Radley (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) keep his identity a secret from Scout and Jem?, one student might be asked to recall information or list details from the night that Boo saved the children.
  - Classmates read to a student who is just beginning to read
  - Another student sits next to the student who experiences autism and rephrases the teacher's instructions or reminds him or her about the steps in an assignment or task
  - Students in a cooperative group brainstorm ways that each group member can participate in their group activity
  - The classroom teacher comes to the student's desk and asks personalized questions, gives reminders about behavioral expectations, puts a hand on the student's shoulder, points to a section of the book being read
  - A speech language pathologists sits with a cooperative group and develops communication boards "on the spot" based on what the student needs to communicate in that activity
  - The teacher might ask a student "which plant structure carries nutrients from the soil to the leaves?" and then say "I'll give you a few minutes -- just raise your hand when you have the answer." While the student is thinking of or finding the answer, the teacher could ask several other questions of the class.
  - The teacher could add or rephrase information. "The relationship between the size of a planet and its mass is..." and then add "Pluto is the smallest planet and Jupiter is the largest."
  - A teacher might give the class a set of general instructions and then walk over to one student's desk and say "Annie, let's take one step at a time here. First you need to..."
  - Students make instructional materials for a classmate such as story syntheses, multiple choice tests, an outline, index study cards

Teaching Others about Student
- Teach staff and students about the students AAC system and other communicative behaviours
- Teach staff seizure management procedures
- Teach staff preventative behaviour management procedures
- Teach peers and adults to ask student to repeat or reword if not understood
- Whole class or small group lessons on disability awareness

Providing Access and Opportunities
- Provide access to general education classes and activities
- Provide access to community based experiences with people without disabilities
- Provide exposure to a variety of career/work experiences
- Provide access to materials in the student's native language
- Provide access to materials and activities with the student cultural background as well as other cultures
- Provide access to co-curricular activities with people without disabilities

Something to think about…
Assistive Technology Definition and Intervention Examples

Definition: *Assistive Technology (AT) is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, weather acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.*

Computer Access
- Smaller or larger screen
- Adapted input devise (joystick, track ball, foot mouse, touch screen, adapted keyboard, switches)
- Keyguard
- Speech recognition
- Mouse emulator – head or eye gaze tracking

Communication
- Speech amplifier
- Single message output devises (go-talk single, big mac, chipper, partner plus)
- Sequential message voice output devises (sequence, smooth talker, step-by-step, tap speak sequence app)
- Manual communication boards
- Typing or writing messages
- Static display communication devises
- Dynamic display communication devises
- Text based speech output devises
- Picture based manual communication systems (PECs, PODD)
- Visual aids to assist speech capacity

Writing – Motor Ability
- Pencil grips and writing splints
- Adapted pens or pencils (i.e. weighed pencil)
- Slant board
- Adapted paper – lined paper, graph paper, raised line paper, bold lines, spacing
- Word processor
- Speech to text
- Adapted keyboard
- Onscreen keyboard
- Adapted computer access
- Writing software with onscreen word banks (Clicker, Write Online, Kurzwell)
- Word Prediction Software (Kurzwell, Clicker, Typ-O app, LetMeType)
- Writing Software using Grids (classroom suite, Clicker, Pix Writer, Edword Grids)

Writing – Composition
- Story starters
- Cloze style work
- Word banks
- Graphic organizers
- Outlines
- Multi-media
- Symbol supported writing
- Talking word processors (Kurzwell, Read and Write Gold, Cliker 6, Word Q)
- Scan and Read Talking Pens (Reading Pen TS, Read Iris Pen, Wiz Com Pen)
- Word prediction
- Spell check
- Pre-made writing grids

Reading
- Limit text or clutter on page
- Lower reading level
- Word wall, dictionary
- Highlighting and color coding
- Change font
- Audio or e-books
- Text to speech
- Talking, visual or electronic dictionary
- Symbol support
- Reading pen
- QR code linking to visual, video and/or audio supports

Mathematics
- Graph paper
- Math glossary or strategy notebook
- Manipulatives
- Number lines
- Touch math
- Real items
- Enlarge print
- Talking calculator

Learning and Studying
- Agenda and/or planner
- Color coding
- Audio recording
- Schedules
- Synchronized write and audio (notify app, pen with voice)
- Checklists

Recreation and Leisure
- Visual supports
- Adapted equipment and grips
- Specialized equipment
- Switch adapted toys and electronics

Seating and Positioning
- Chair with arms
- Standing desk
- Cushions and wiggle seats
- Foot rest/stool
- Arm and leg supports
- Slant boards, easels, lapboards
- Accessible desks
- Corner chair
- Stander
- Custom seating system
- Alternative seating (ball chair)

Mobility
- Marked pathways
- Railings
- Visual cues
- Textured floors
- Elevators, lifts
- Canes
- Walkers
- Power mobility
- Crutches

Vision
- High contrast materials
- Enlarged text or specific font
- Magnifiers
- Clear visual field
- Slant board
- Clear markings in the environment
- Braille
- Talking devises
- Tactile images and 3-D models
- Accessible text
- Software – screen readers, text to speech

Hearing
- Visual cues to gain attention
- Attend to lighting noise
- Hearing aids
- FM system
- Sound field amplification
- Visual and/or tactile representation of auditory input

Fading, Decreasing, Eliminating or Modifying Supports
***The Golden Rule of Providing Support in Inclusive Classrooms: Support Others as You Would Wish to Be Supported* by Julie N. Causton-Theoharis**

In following the golden rule of adult support, you must first imagine yourself in the student's place. How would you want the support that you required to look and feel? Many people would first and foremost

want to direct their support and have a say over how and when someone provided them with support. Second, people would want the support to be discreet. They would prefer unhindered access to their peers and would want the support to have a specific purpose and to fade away when unnecessary. Four distinct steps related to how to support are (1) plan to include, (2) ask and listen, (3) step back and (4) plan to fade your support.

Fading assistance means systematically reducing the type and level of support given to a student and often refers to fading the use of adult directed support. Fading support can reduce the negative impact of adult support and allow for more natural supports to occur. The research in fading support is clear. Invasive adult support has had inadvertent detrimental effects on students with disabilities.

There are some supports that can, and should, be faded. The following questions will help your team make decisions about how to effectively fade or modify these supports:
1. When is it necessary to be next to this student (e.g., when providing medical assistance, lifting or transferring a student, or furnishing personal care)?
2. For this skill or time period, is the goal independence (done by the student himself or herself) or interdependence (done with the support of a peer)?
3. What types of cues are educators using with this student (see table below)?
4. What next step will reduce the type and level of support given to this student (see table below)?
5. Can anyone else provide more natural supports to this student?
6. What materials or content should educators modify to allow the student to experience more independence?

A Range of Supports (Listed From Most Intrusive to Least Intrusive)

Type of Support	Definition	Example
Full physical	Direct and physical assistance used to support a student.	Hand-over-hand assistance while a student writes his or her name.
Partial physical	Physical assistance provided for some of the total movement required for the activity.	Putting a zipper into the bottom portion and beginning to pull it up; the student then pulls the zipper up the rest of the way.
Modeling	A demonstration of what the student is to do.	The paraprofessional does an art project; the student uses the art project as a model
Direct oral	Oral information provided directly to the student.	"Josh, stand up now."
Indirect verbal	A verbal reminder that prompts the student to attend to or think about what is expected.	"Josh, what should happen next?"
Gestural	A physical movement to communicate or accentuate a cue (e.g., head nod, thumbs up, pointing).	Paraprofessional points to the agenda written on the board.
Natural	Providing no cue; allowing the ordinary cues that exist in the environment help the student know what to do.	The bell rings for class. The teacher asks students to move to the rug. A message on the chalkboard reads "Turn to page 74."

Natural Supports
The University of Wisconsin: Natural Supports: http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/index.php

"When educational difficulties are thought to arise from the special educational needs of children and young people, it can seem natural to think of support as about providing additional people to work with individual children to overcome their problems. We adopt a far broader notion of support

as all activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to the diversity of children and young people in ways that value them equally. So efforts to uncover and reduce barriers to learning and participation, and the mobilization of resources, are support activities.

Since, on our definition, the inclusive development of teaching and learning are support activities, support involves all staff, children and their families. If learning activities are designed to support the participation of all children, the need for individual support is reduced. Support is provided when teachers plan lessons with all children in mind, recognizing their different starting points, interests, experiences and approaches to learning. There is an equivalence between sitting with a child who struggles to understand the terminology of lesson, and revising the activity so that it is rooted in a common experience for children, extends everyone's learning and the language can be generally understood. Individual support to children should always be given with the intention of encouraging greater independence: of increasing a child's capacity to learn and the capacity of adults and children to include them within learning activities." (Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow)

Natural supports are relationships, interactions, assistance, connections, and resources. They enhance inclusion, belonging, contributions and quality of life for students with and without disabilities.

"The natural-supports approach emphasizes the importance of providing supports in the environments the person would access if he or she did not have a disability (e.g., home, neighborhood, local school, regular classroom, job sites) and relying on people who would be in the environment even if the person did not have a disability (e.g., family members, community members, classmates, co-workers, general education teachers) (Nisbet, 1992). Whereas specialists may have expertise within their discipline, it is the people who spend the most time with the student on an ongoing basis who have the most experience based "expertise" about the person (Kunc, 1992). The natural-supports approach recognizes the importance of self-advocacy by people with disabilities in shaping their own lives." (Giangreco)

Virtually anyone can act as a natural support for someone else. This can include friends, peers, classmates, teammates, club members, neighbors, co-workers, family members, acquaintances, congregations, and many, many others.

For children and youth with disabilities, however, this usually includes paraprofessionals and special educators, job coaches, special transportation, service providers or "special friends". It is important to expand beyond these usual supports to those people who may be involved in a youth's life in a more natural way.

Adults may inadvertently set youth with disabilities apart from their classmates. This can limit a youth's interactions with his or her classmates while also decreasing contact between youth, general education teachers, or other group leaders.   It can also hinder student learning and achievement. Youth with disabilities may then be encouraged to be unnecessarily dependent on adults, which can limit self-determination. Some supports, like an adult paraprofessional that a youth with disabilities may have come to depend on, may not always be there, so it is important that a greater variety of supports be cultivated.

"Natural-support proponents have argued that the escalating level of increasingly specialized services provided to people with disabilities is a negative trend that has the following effects:
• *Unnecessarily isolates people with disabilities.*

- *Creates unnecessary and unnatural dependencies.*
- *Interferes with the development of natural relationships and supports.*
- *Disrupts participation in school activities.*
- *Causes inequities in the distribution of scarce resources.*
- *May not be economically viable.*
- *May be more an indication of perpetuating and expanding the professional disciplines then serving people with disabilities."* (Giangreco)

In a school setting, it is natural to look at peers as a possible natural support for youth with disabilities.

Peers make sense for a number of reasons:
- Peers are readily available.
- Peers are "experts" on social skill and what it takes to "fit in".
- Peers are not as "stigmatizing".
- Peers are great problem solvers.
- Peers are future supports.
- Peers benefit from the relationship.

When thinking of setting up natural supports, there are several important elements that should be put in place to achieve success. Five landmarks that are used to create an environment that is receptive to creating natural supports include:

1. Providing shared activities: Engaging in shared activities one way for relationships to develop among youth with and without disabilities. When considering if an activity is truly "shared" among youth with and without disabilities, the following three questions should be asked:
   - Are youth with and without disabilities present in the same space?
   - Are youth with and without disabilities there at the same time?
   - Are youth with and without disabilities engaged in the same activity?

2. Designing valued roles: Youth with disabilities are typically placed into the role of designated recipient of help while youth without disabilities are typically placed into a perpetual helper role. This is a problem! Youth with disabilities need to have roles that are valued by all youth. Questions to consider when determining if a role is valuable include:
   - Would someone else need to do the task if someone with a disability wasn't doing it?
   - Are the tasks done by youth with disabilities "cool" and desirable?
   - Are youth with disabilities contributing in ways that they choose (as other students do)?
   - Are you with disabilities contributing to different roles over time?

3. Equipping peers and others: For natural supports to occur, youth and others must be properly equipped to offer support.

4. Offering "just enough" support: To guide you, here are a set of questions on a continuum from the most natural to the least natural amount of support:
   - Can the student do this on his or her own?
   - Can the student do this if given the right technology or adaptive equipment?
   - Can the student do this if given just a little instruction?
   - Can the student do this with a little help from a friend or peer?

- Can the student do this with someone's help in the setting?
- Can the student do this with occasional help from a teacher or other staff?
- Can the student do this with regular help from a teacher or other staff?

5. Reflecting on the journey: As you progress on your way to creating natural supports, take time to reflect on your journey. What have you learned about yourself and others? Did you hit any roadblocks on the way? What did you learn from those roadblocks?

Alberta Education Support Related Publications and Links

- Medical/Disability Information for Classroom Teachers: http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inmdict/html/index.html
- Supporting Social Participation: http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/insp/html/index.html
- Supporting Positive Behaviour: http://www.education.alberta.ca/admin/special/resources/behaviour.aspx