

Inclusion in Lawrence Public Schools

We are committed to embracing effective inclusive practices by providing increased and meaningful opportunities, supporting additional resources for each neighborhood zone, offering high quality professional learning and advocacy, as well as promoting the understanding that student's individual needs must be considered.

- **Inclusion in Lawrence Public Schools relies on a values-oriented mindset.**

Inclusion is based on the premise that all students with disabilities, regardless of disability type and level of need, have a right to be educated with their nondisabled peers and to be fully included as a member of their general education classrooms and school community. Inclusion is achieved by a commitment to educate each student to the maximum extent appropriate in the classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support to the student rather than bringing the student to the supports outside of the general education setting. Inclusion requires IEP teams to collaborate and ensure that students derive educational and social benefit from being in the class as mere physical placement in the general education classroom is not sufficient. This requires a commitment to move needed services and resources to the student with the disability rather than placing the student where the services presently exist in a more removed or separate setting.

- **Inclusion in Lawrence Public Schools requires strategic scheduling.**

Scheduled time for daily and/or weekly collaboration between general education and special education educators is crucial so they may best teach and reach all students, including those with various disabilities. This charge serves to expand the roles of special educators and general educators so that the primary responsibility for the education of students with disabilities in an inclusive setting rests with both teachers. Support and advocacy for this belief includes collaborating with our families, community members, and those committed to protecting the rights of students with disabilities. The development of the *Special Education Advisory Cabinet* will be leading the next phase of this work.

- **Inclusion in Lawrence Public Schools must be student-centered.**

Teachers must assess where each of their students are academically, socially, and culturally to determine how best to facilitate their learning. Student-centered inclusion teachers view their role as educating the “whole student” rather than simply delivering curriculum. Expertise in assessments, co-teaching, standards-mastery learning, students’ learning styles, differentiated accommodations and modifications are most important for our teachers to develop and implement in general classrooms for students with and without disabilities. Professional Development should support this effort with individualized and adaptive learning approaches, universal design for learning, cooperative learning strategies, models of co-teaching, as well as Massachusetts’ Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Embedded into the above practices will be effective strategies for social-emotional learning and restorative justice.

