SPECIAL EDUCATION HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMMING GUIDE

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Kent ISD
Special Education

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Kent ISD Special Education Belief Statement

The Kent ISD Special Education department prioritizes the use of data to drive decisions and believes that to expand knowledge the usage of evidenced-based and trauma-informed practices are critically important to achieve meaningful outcomes for students with complex needs. In light of this:

- We are focused on providing opportunities for students to make progress throughout each school day rather than influences and/or barriers that are beyond our control
- We strive to create learning environments in which students are willing participants
- We meet students where they are and follow their lead to teach critical skills
- We seek to understand why behavior occurs before attempting to change it
- We value student self-advocacy and their communication in any form over forced compliance
- We prioritize safety, relationships, and dignified alternatives for our students above all else , especially in moments of crisis

We provide technical assistance, workshops and training, consultation, and coaching to local district teams, and development of innovative initiatives to provide access to the classroom and curriculum.

Special Education High-Quality Programming Guide

The Kent ISD Special Education Department is dedicated to supporting and collaborating with special education programs across the county by providing clear indicators of high-quality programming within this document and offering implementation support. Our goal is to guide the development of effective educational environments through data-driven decision-making and by fostering professional growth using evidence-based and trauma-informed practices. This document is intended to support programs in continually improving practices and moving closer to educating students in the least restrictive environment, ensuring meaningful and inclusive learning opportunities for all.

Curriculum & Instruction
1.1 The special education team provides instruction aligned with student goals that ensures students spend the majority of their time engaged in meaningful learning activities, with multiple opportunities to actively respond and participate.
1.2 Supportive transitions between activities are incorporated throughout the school day to promote consistency and readiness for learning.
1.3 Specially Designed Instruction is tailored to each student's eligibility area, disability-related needs, and strengths and interests. It focuses on building relevant skills that promote access to inclusive environments (e.g., social-emotional, communication, behavior, adaptive and academic) and is integrated into daily classroom activities.
1.4 High-quality instructional materials and meaningful, differentiated activities are aligned with the common core or alternate standards and delivered through systematic, sequential, explicit instruction.
1.5 Instructional grouping is flexible and responsive, using evidence-based techniques that align with individual learning preferences to enhance engagement and reduce frustration.
1.6 Each student has robust functional communication using diverse methods to express a wide range of communicative functions. These methods may include speech, gestures, facial expressions, signs, light/low-tech AAC, mid-tech AAC, or high-tech AAC, effectively applied across various environments, partners, tasks, and activities.

1.7 Visual supports are thoughtfully designed and consistently referenced and reinforced to support skill development and encourage independence in a way that respects each student's learning style.
1.8 Opportunities for peer interactions are intentionally designed, guided by data, and facilitated in inclusive settings to the greatest extent possible, prioritizing meaningful connections and fostering relationships aligned with each student's unique interests, communication styles, and preferred ways of engaging.
1.9 Intentional conversations and observations are completed to document students' current preferences and interests, which are communicated to all relevant team members.
1.10 Students can make choices and provide input based on their strengths and interests while staying aware of their progress toward the learning targets.
1.11 Targeted goals are collaboratively developed based on assessment tools and integrated into the daily schedule, ensuring they reflect student interests and unique needs related to their eligibility area.
1.12 The special education team checks for understanding and offers specific and constructive feedback throughout all learning activities, fostering supportive learning environments.
1.13 Staff facilitate supportive interactions following a conflict to help restore individual and classroom relationships, emphasizing empathy and understanding.
Positive Learning Environment Design
2.1 Positive and supportive interactions with students occur at a high ratio, at least 5:1, to create a climate that promotes emotional safety and trust.
2.2 Classroom procedures, routines, and transitions are collaboratively taught and reinforced using supports that empower students and promote their autonomy.
2.3 The physical space/layout is intentionally organized to support students' emotional, sensory, and learning needs, with clearly identified areas (e.g., regulation space, work area, collaborative space) to offer choice and flexibility.

2.4 Learning time is optimized by creating focused, engaging learning opportunities that support individual and group needs. Staff actively move throughout the environment to provide support and connection.
2.5 Sensory activities are personalized and offered based on the student's preferences, ensuring the student feels comfortable and willing to engage.
2.6 When students face challenges, they are met with empathy, validation, and intentional support to build resilience and persistence at their own pace.
2.7 The roles of paraeducators are clearly defined to promote student autonomy – encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and develop the skills needed for greater independence and accessing less restrictive environments – while supporting effective, consistent classroom routines that prioritize student strengths and capabilities.
2.8 Behaviors that impact the learning environment and interfere with accessing the least restrictive environment are described in the student's IEP and supported through individualized, proactive strategies outlined in a strengths-based PBSP, informed by comprehensive and current assessment data.
2.9 Staff review and monitor progress on the Behavior Plan on an ongoing basis, minimally every two weeks, ensuring specific goals, dates, and measurement methods are documented. *Graphing or other visual representation methods are preferred for tracking progress and making data accessible.
Professional Responsibilities
3.1 IEP supplementary aids and services (e.g., assistive technology, communication systems, visual supports, differentiated instruction, and individualized behavior supports) are prioritized and consistently implemented across all learning environments as stated in the IEP, ensuring students have access to their least restrictive environment.
3.2 Instructional planning is intentional and strengths-based, addressing each student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs using data to maximize meaningful time in the least restrictive environment.

3.3 The special education team, including the general education teacher(s), collaborates and communicates proactively within the school community to foster an inclusive environment, challenge ableism, and support the success of all students.
3.4 Program-wide meetings are regularly scheduled, involving teachers, itinerants, and/or paraeducators, to enhance collaborative problem-solving and support effective IEP development and implementation.
3.5 Families are valued as essential team members, and ongoing, collaborative communication is established through multiple methods (e.g., notes home, classroom newsletters, sharing data) to keep them informed and engaged.
Program Principles
4.1 Classrooms embed culturally affirming practices and respect for diverse backgrounds, fostering an inclusive environment where all students feel a sense of belonging. Teaching practices are adapted to support every learner's unique strengths and needs.
4.2 The organizational climate fosters a sense of compassion and responsibility for all students. It uses a trauma-assumed approach to support their autonomy and competence within a safe and supportive environment.
4.3 All program staff focus on providing meaningful opportunities for student growth and inclusion throughout each school day, addressing what is within our control rather than external influences or barriers.
4.4 All program staff recognize the unique needs associated with disabilities and presume competence, designing strengths-based instruction responsive to each student's requirements.
4.5 All program staff strive to create engaging and supportive learning environments where students are motivated and empowered to participate willingly.
4.6 All program staff meet students where they are, honoring their pace and interests while following their lead to teach essential skills.

4.7 All program staff seek to understand why behavior occurs before attempting to change it.
4.8 All program staff value student self-advocacy and their communication in any form over forced compliance.
4.9 All program staff use de-escalation strategies that prioritize safety, relationships, and dignified alternatives, ensuring that students are supported with respect and care, especially during moments of crisis.

Evidence to Consider - Curriculum & Instruction

Teacher Name: _____ *Date*: _____ *Time*: _____

Observer: _____ *Focus Area*: _____

Instructions for Use:	**Alignment with High-Quality Educational Frameworks:**
• Check off the items consistently present or occurring in the classroom. • Select the highlights - It is not expected to see all items in one visit. • Evidence listed is not exhaustive and not every item is appropriate or expected for every student.	PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports RP = Restorative Practices TIC = Trauma-Informed Care HLP = High-Leverage Practices for Special Education ND = Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices

Curriculum & Instruction	**Evidence to consider**
1.1 The special education team provides instruction aligned with student goals that ensures students spend the majority of their time engaged in meaningful learning activities, with multiple opportunities to actively respond and participate.	☐ Lesson plans show how activities support students' IEP goals, with embedded scaffolds or supports based on individual needs. These are documented in written plans. *(PBIS, HLP, ND, TIC)* ☐ Time-on-task sampling or engagement logs show that at least 80% of instructional time involves students actively engaged in meaningful tasks tied to their goals. *(PBIS, HLP, ND)* ☐ Lesson plans and student work samples include tasks that allow students to practice and apply skills in real-world or functional contexts (e.g., mock scenarios, community simulations). *(PBIS, HLP, ND)* ☐ Students are observed using visuals, assistive technology, AAC, or other accommodations that promote regulation and engagement during instruction. *(PBIS, ND, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Classroom observations and instructional logs show students are provided 4–6 response opportunities per minute (new material) and 8–12 per minute (review), using multiple modalities (e.g., verbal, AAC, gestures). *(PBIS, HLP, ND)* ☐ Observers note that teachers provide 5–10 seconds of think time before student responses and use visual or non-verbal cues to encourage participation. *(PBIS, HLP, TIC, ND)* ☐ SDI and progress monitoring data show that student groups are adjusted based on current academic performance and regulation needs. *(PBIS, TIC, HLP, ND)*

	☐ Observers note that teachers verbally explain changes to instruction during lessons to support student needs, attention, or feedback. *(PBIS, TIC, RP, ND, HLP)* ☐ Student-created reflections, check-ins, or visual artifacts demonstrate awareness of personal goals, learning strategies, or accommodations. *(RP, ND, TIC, HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Instructional teams maintain and review academic or behavioral data (e.g., progress monitoring logs, goal tracking charts) to guide lesson adjustments. *(PBIS, HLP)*
1.2 Supportive transitions between activities are incorporated throughout the school day to promote consistency and readiness for learning.	☐ Schoolwide transition expectations are clearly documented (e.g., in behavior matrices or classroom routines) and are consistently followed across learning environments. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Visual, auditory, or kinesthetic cues (e.g., timers, music, verbal countdowns, hand signals) are observable during transitions and embedded in lesson plans or classroom procedures. *(PBIS, TIC, ND)* ☐ Staff use pre-corrective prompts at least 2–5 minutes before transitions (e.g., "In two minutes, we'll…"), which are noted in walkthroughs or scripting tools. *(PBIS, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Transitions are efficient—typically occurring within 3–5 minutes—and transition duration is monitored through observation or classroom time logs. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Predictable routines are visible in the environment (e.g., posted schedules, first–then visuals, consistent order of activities) and referenced during instruction. *(PBIS, TIC, HLP, ND)* ☐ Staff use relational and co-regulation strategies (e.g., individual check-ins, calm tone, validating student cues) during transitions and these interactions are observable in classroom walkthroughs. *(TIC, RP, ND)* ☐ Transition effectiveness is intermittently reviewed using data such as time-on-task after transitions, behavior records, and transition observation checklists. This information is used to adjust supports and improve practices. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Transitions include embedded regulation supports (e.g., deep breathing, stretching, mindfulness routines), observable in practice and noted in lesson plans or transition scripts. *(TIC, ND, HLP)*
1.3 Specially Designed Instruction is tailored to each student's eligibility area, disability-related needs, and strengths and interests. It focuses on building relevant skills that promote access to inclusive environments (e.g., social-emotional, communication, behavior, adaptive, and academic) and is integrated into daily classroom activities.	☐ Lesson plans and SDI explicitly connect each activity to a student's IEP goals/objectives and are aligned to each student's eligibility area. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ During walkthroughs, staff clearly state how today's tasks target specific disability-related needs (e.g., "This partner read supports auditory processing"). Plans, notes, or scripts document these explanations. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Instructional resources (readings, word problems, visuals) are personalized to student strengths or interests and are noted in lesson plans. *(ND, HLP)* ☐ Observation logs show students actively working on social-emotional, communication, behavioral, adaptive, or academic skills identified for inclusion success. *(PBIS, TIC, ND)* ☐ Small-group or peer-mediated activities appear in plans and are observed in practice, giving students chances to build communication, executive-function, and teamwork skills. *(RP, ND, HLP)*

	☐ *Accommodations and modifications* (e.g., visuals, sentence starters) *are clearly embedded in both general and special education settings, showing that individualized supports are not limited to separate or pull-out instruction. (PBIS, TIC, ND, HLP)* ☐ Instructional strategies and interventions are evidence-based and matched to student needs—for example, using Direct Instruction for academic skills or video modeling to support communication. Educators can clearly explain how the selected strategy supports the learner's needs and eligibility area. (*PBIS, HLP*) ☐ Choice boards, menus, or preference surveys are on display or in digital folders; observers see students selecting meaningful options and expressing preferences. *(ND, RP)* ☐ Collected reflections, rating scales, or short surveys show students evaluating how instruction matches their goals and accommodations; these artifacts are stored for review. *(RP, ND, HLP)* ☐ Progress-monitoring charts or intervention logs document how academic/behavioral data are used to tweak materials, groupings, or strategies. *(PBIS, HLP)*
1.4 High-quality instructional materials and meaningful, differentiated activities are aligned with the common core or alternate standards and delivered through systematic, sequential, explicit instruction.	☐ Lesson plans reference the Common Core or Alternate Standard and learning target for each activity; materials (slides, worksheets, digital tasks, manipulatives) are intentionally aligned to support these standards and learning objectives. *(HLP)* ☐ Instructional materials are visibly organized (binders, bins, digital folders) and within reach, minimizing downtime during lessons. *(PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Walkthrough notes show students working in varied groups or with tiered tasks, scaffolds, or technology that match individual needs. Grouping charts or task menus are saved with lesson artifacts. *(ND, HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Written scope-and-sequence charts or unit maps illustrate the step-by-step progression from prerequisite to advanced skills. *(HLP, TIC)* ☐ Teachers reference an anchor chart or slide that shows how today's lesson builds on previous learning, reinforcing cumulative learning. *(HLP, TIC)* ☐ Plans and student work samples show a gradual-release sequence (model → guided → independent). *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Formative assessments (e.g., quick checks, exit tickets, etc.) are used during and after instruction to measure student understanding, with the data informing instructional adjustments such as reteaching and scaffolding to support learning needs. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observers note systematic CFU (e.g., choral response, hand signals) every 2–3 minutes, with immediate feedback recorded in lesson scripts. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Visual aids, prompts, or cue cards are in use; plans include notes on how and when supports will be reduced. *(HLP, TIC, ND)* ☐ Meeting notes, shared pacing guides, or co-planned lessons show collaboration between special- and general-education staff to keep instruction aligned with grade-level standards. *(HLP, RP)*

1.5 Instructional grouping is flexible and responsive, using evidence-based techniques that align with individual learning preferences to enhance engagement and reduce frustration.	☐ Group compositions are documented in lesson plans or grouping charts and updated regularly based on student data (e.g., progress monitoring, behavioral observations). *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Students are observed participating in varied groups across activities (e.g., by skill, interest, language, or peer compatibility), and this flexibility is reflected in plans. *(PBIS, ND, HLP)* ☐ During observations or professional conversations, staff can articulate how groupings support different learning modalities or regulation needs (e.g., visual/auditory preferences, social comfort). *(HLP, ND, TIC)* ☐ Observers note high student engagement (≥80% time-on-task) during group activities, with all students participating through multiple response formats. *(PBIS, HLP, ND)* ☐ Teachers are seen using proactive supports like task chunking, scaffolds, praise, and breaks to help students persist through challenges. Plans or scripts document these techniques. *(TIC, HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observers note that staff adjust instruction on the spot (e.g., change task complexity or rotate roles) based on student understanding, pacing, or regulation needs. *(PBIS, TIC, HLP)* ☐ Students are provided structured choices in grouping or task formats (e.g., partner selection, materials, roles), with menus or visual aids used to support autonomy. *(ND, RP, HLP)* ☐ Staff actively structure and coach peer interactions during group work, with targeted prompts for students with social-emotional or communication goals. *(RP, TIC, HLP)*
1.6 Each student has robust functional communication using diverse methods to express a wide range of communicative functions. These methods may include speech, gestures, facial expressions, signs, light/low-tech AAC, mid-tech AAC, or high-tech AAC, effectively applied across various environments, partners, tasks, and activities.	☐ Students are observed using a range of communication modes (e.g., AAC, gestures, speech, signs) independently or with minimal prompting to express needs, wants, ideas, and emotions. *(PBIS, ND, HLP)* ☐ Staff can clearly describe each student's primary communication methods and explain how these connect to IEP communication goals. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Observations and communication logs show students using their communication systems in multiple settings (e.g., classroom, hallway, lunch, specials) and activity types (academic, social, self-regulation). *(PBIS, ND, TIC)* ☐ Students are observed using communication for a variety of functions, including requesting, commenting, protesting, asking questions, and expressing feelings. Logs or tallies confirm breadth of use. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Students effectively communicate with different communication partners (e.g., peers, teachers, paraeducators), and observers note partner responsiveness and reciprocal interaction. *(RP, HLP, ND)* ☐ Staff are observed modeling communication using the student's system (e.g., aided language stimulation), and they prompt or expand utterances (e.g., from "want snack" to "I want snack please"). *(HLP, ND)* ☐ AAC devices and tools are accessible, charged, and customized with vocabulary relevant to the student's routines, preferences, and current events. Plans or programming sheets confirm updates. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Staff can produce updated or personalized tools (e.g., core boards, fringe folders, topic boards) that reflect seasonal events, classroom routines, or recent experiences. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Meeting notes, communication plans, or consultation logs show that SLPs collaborate with the team to align communication supports and strategies. *(HLP)*

1.7 Visual supports are thoughtfully designed and consistently referenced and reinforced to support skill development and encourage independence in a way that respects each student's learning style.	☐ Visual supports (e.g., schedules, task strips, first/then boards) are personalized for each student's developmental level, updated to match current routines, and accessible throughout the day. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Staff are observed referencing and modeling the use of visual supports, prompting students to check or use them (e.g., "What does your schedule say is next?"). *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Staff can explain how visual supports are linked to targeted skills (e.g., self-regulation, communication, independence) and provide examples of how they're used to build those skills. *(HLP, TIC)* ☐ Students are observed using visual supports independently to complete routines, navigate transitions, solve problems, or track reinforcement with minimal prompting. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Classrooms contain and use a range of visuals (e.g., visual schedules, token boards, emotion charts, social stories, environmental labels, choice boards), as documented in lesson plans or photos. *(HLP, ND, TIC)* ☐ Visuals reflect student preferences and processing styles (e.g., color-coded, authentic photos, symbols, or simplified icons), and are evident in permanent materials. *(ND, HLP)* ☐ Data on visual support use and student independence is reviewed regularly (e.g., fade logs, skill checklists), and supports are adjusted to reflect student growth and changing needs. *(PBIS, HLP)*
1.8 Opportunities for peer interactions are intentionally designed, guided by data, and facilitated in inclusive settings to the greatest extent possible, prioritizing meaningful connections and fostering relationships aligned with each student's unique interests, communication styles, and preferred ways of engaging.	☐ Lesson plans and posted materials include structured peer interaction activities (e.g., cooperative learning, turn-taking games) with objectives linked to IEP or SEL goals. *(HLP, RP)* ☐ When IEPs include peer interaction goals, and staff can explain the strategies used to help students work toward these goals. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Observers note students engaging with peers in inclusive settings (e.g., classrooms, lunchrooms, playgrounds), with supports such as visuals or peer partners in place to ensure meaningful participation. (*PBIS, ND, TIC*) ☐ Peer groupings are based on shared interests or complementary strengths; groupings are documented and revised as needed to support sustained connection. (*ND, RP*) ☐ Students use their preferred communication methods (e.g., AAC, gestures, speech) during peer interactions, with tools like sentence starters, scripts, or visuals in use and documented. (*HLP, ND, TIC*) ☐ Staff are observed modeling peer interactions (e.g., greetings, turn-taking) and gradually reducing prompting as students gain independence; progress is documented in anecdotal notes or fade plans. (*HLP, RP, PBIS*) ☐ Observations and team notes reflect students interacting with familiar peers, with signs of reciprocal relationships forming (e.g., initiating, responding, laughing together). (*RP, ND*) ☐ Schedules include unstructured or semi-structured peer engagement opportunities (e.g., free play, recess, lunch), with staff supporting spontaneous interactions as needed to promote access and connection. (*PBIS, TIC, ND*)
1.9 Intentional conversations and observations are completed to document students' current	☐ Staff maintain and regularly update a documented profile of each student's interests and learning preferences using tools such as surveys, checklists, interviews, and observation logs. These are informed by student conversations, daily observations, and family input. *(HLP, ND, RP)*

preferences and interests, which are communicated to all relevant team members.	☐ Documented preferences are reviewed collaboratively and shared with all relevant team members (e.g., general education staff, paraprofessionals, related service providers) through planning documents, team meetings, or internal communications. These profiles are intentionally used to inform instructional design and student engagement strategies. (*HLP, RP, ND*) ☐ Lesson plans and classroom activities reflect student interests (e.g., preferred topics embedded in reading tasks), and adjustments are clearly tied to documented preference data. (*HLP, ND*) ☐ Students are observed making choices in learning tasks (e.g., selecting materials, topics, group roles, or project formats), with visual menus or written choice boards available for support. (*ND, RP, HLP*)
1.10 Students can make choices and provide input based on their strengths and interests while staying aware of their progress toward the learning targets.	☐ Staff complete and update student preference inventories or interest surveys quarterly, using student interviews, observations, and family input. These are stored in planning folders or digital student files. (*HLP, ND, RP*) ☐ Staff use observation logs or anecdotal notes to track students' emerging interests, preferred task types, and engagement styles across settings (e.g., small group, independent work, free play). (*HLP, ND*) ☐ Family insights about student preferences are gathered via conversations, surveys, or questionnaires and shared in team meetings or internal communication platforms. (*HLP, RP, ND*) ☐ Documented student interests and strengths are communicated regularly to the full team (e.g., teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals) and referenced in planning meetings or IEP documentation. (*HLP, RP*) ☐ Lesson plans and instructional materials show incorporation of student preferences (e.g., themes, visuals, texts, examples), with alignment to specific IEP goals or content standards. (*HLP, ND*) ☐ Students are observed participating in tasks that align with their documented interests, showing engagement through verbal/nonverbal participation, sustained attention, and task persistence. (*HLP, ND*) ☐ Instructional tasks provide students with meaningful choices in process or product (e.g., how to show understanding, which partner to work with), documented via menus, schedules, or digital platforms. (*ND, RP, HLP)* ☐ Students are provided opportunities to reflect on their learning progress and give input into tasks or goals (e.g., choosing between goal-related activities, using self-assessment tools). (*HLP, ND*)
1.11 Targeted goals are collaboratively developed based on assessment tools and integrated into the daily schedule, ensuring they reflect student interests and unique needs related to their eligibility area.	☐ IEP or team-meeting notes show goals crafted with input from special educators, related service providers, families, and the student, citing multiple data sources (formal tests, observations, progress data). (*HLP, RP)* ☐ Goal statements in the IEP explicitly connect to the student's eligibility area and embed personal interests or strengths (e.g., social goals tied to gaming interest). (*HLP, ND)* ☐ Daily or weekly schedules highlight when each goal is practiced (e.g., phonics goal in literacy block, peer-interaction goal at recess), shown in lesson plans or posted timetables. (*HLP, PBIS)*

	☐ Walkthroughs reveal students practicing targeted skills during academics, transitions, and social times, with staff prompting or reinforcing as needed. *(HLP, PBIS, ND)* ☐ Tasks designed to meet goals incorporate student-preferred topics or materials (e.g., high-interest books), evident in plans and observed instruction. *(ND, HLP)* ☐ Data is collected at regular intervals (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly) and used to inform instructional adjustments or revisions to goals.*(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Documentation (e.g., IEP amendments, Notice, etc) shows that goals are revised as needed based on progress monitoring data and team input. *(HLP, RP, PBIS)* ☐ Goal summaries are shared via communication logs or quick-reference sheets; general-education and related staff can state current targets and supports. *(HLP, RP)* ☐ Staff can articulate the student's current goals and describe how they are being addressed in different environments (e.g., during small-group instruction or therapy sessions). ☐ Visual goal charts, progress trackers, or self-monitoring tools are posted or digital; staff reference them with students to encourage ownership. *(ND, PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Observations show students updating trackers, discussing progress, and receiving reinforcement for milestones, demonstrating awareness of their learning targets. *(ND, PBIS)*
1.12 The special education team checks for understanding and offers specific and constructive feedback throughout all learning activities, fostering supportive learning environments.	☐ Lesson plans or observations show staff using multiple check-for-understanding methods (e.g., questioning, whiteboards, demonstrations, quick polls) at least every 5-10 minutes during instruction. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observers note teachers immediately re-teach, scaffold, or extend tasks based on student responses. Adjustments are annotated in teaching notes. *(HLP, PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Students with communication support needs use AAC, visuals, gestures, or simplified response systems to demonstrate understanding; devices and boards are visible and in use. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Staff provide prompt, descriptive feedback linked to strategies or effort (e.g., "Great strategy—next time double-check the last step."). Feedback language is observable in lesson recordings or walkthrough notes. *(PBIS, HLP, RP)* ☐ Work samples show students revising or extending tasks after feedback; observers see students apply guidance in real time. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Checklists, rubrics, or self-monitoring charts are provided and used by students to evaluate their own progress before seeking teacher feedback. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Feedback is adapted to each student's communication style (e.g., visuals, modeling, simplified language) and respectful of sensory/processing preferences. *(ND, TIC)* ☐ Team meeting notes or shared protocols document agreed-upon feedback strategies; observers see similar feedback practices across general-ed, small-group, and one-on-one instruction. *(HLP, RP)* ☐ Classroom observations capture empathetic tone, calm delivery, and student willingness to ask for help, indicating a psychologically safe environment for receiving feedback. *(TIC, RP, PBIS)*

1.13 Staff facilitate supportive interactions following a conflict to help restore individual and classroom relationships, emphasizing empathy and understanding.	☐ Observations show staff using a consistent protocol or script (e.g., restorative questions) to guide students through post-conflict conversations, allowing all parties to share their perspectives. (*HLP, RP, PBIS*) ☐ Staff are observed prompting students with questions like "What happened?" "How did it make you feel?" and "What can we do to repair?", with logs or scripts available as documentation. (*RP, PBIS*) ☐ During and after conflict resolution, staff model empathetic thinking (e.g., "Let's think about how your classmate felt") and encourage students to consider others' feelings and viewpoints. (*RP, TIC, ND*) ☐ Observations and classroom setup confirm calming strategies (e.g., breathing, movement breaks, sensory tools) are offered before or after conflict to support regulation. (*PBIS, TIC, ND*) ☐ Staff consistently facilitate practices such as restorative chats, conflict resolution circles, or peer repair opportunities to rebuild trust and classroom harmony. (*RP, PBIS*) ☐ Staff are observed acknowledging and reinforcing when students take responsibility, offer amends, or show prosocial behavior following a conflict. (*PBIS, RP*) ☐ Conflict resolution strategies are individualized based on students' communication preferences or emotional regulation needs (e.g., using visuals, AAC, or short scripting), supported by planning documents or behavior plans. (*HLP, ND, TIC*) ☐ When appropriate, communication logs or notes home reflect that families are informed about significant peer conflicts and the resolution steps, reinforcing home-school consistency. (*HLP, RP*)

Evidence to Consider - Positive Learning Environment Design

Teacher Name: _____ *Date*: _____ *Time*: _____

Observer: _____ *Focus Area*: _____

***Instructions for Use*:** • Check off the items consistently present or occurring in the classroom. • Select the highlights - It is not expected to see all items in one visit. • Evidence listed is not exhaustive and not every item is appropriate or expected for every student.	**Alignment with High-Quality Educational Frameworks:** PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports RP = Restorative Practices TIC = Trauma-Informed Care HLP = High-Leverage Practices for Special Education ND = Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices

Positive Learning Environment Design	Evidence to consider
2.1 Positive and supportive interactions with students occur at a high ratio, at least 5:1, to create a climate that promotes emotional safety and trust.	☐ Observational data (e.g., classroom walkthroughs, self-monitoring tallies) confirm at least five positive/supportive interactions (e.g., praise, encouragement, smiles, affirming feedback) for every one corrective interaction. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Staff consistently use strengths-based, student-centered language (e.g., "You really stuck with that!") to validate effort and encourage participation. *(TIC, HLP)* ☐ Staff consistently use strengths-based, student-centered language (e.g., "You really stuck with that!") to validate effort and encourage participation. Documentation may include staff scripting tools or coaching reflections. *(TIC, HLP)* ☐ Observations show staff using co-regulation strategies (e.g., breathing with students, calming prompts) rather than power-based compliance demands. Staff can explain how they model self-regulation. *(ND, TIC)* ☐ Student perception data (e.g., surveys, anonymous check-ins, circle prompts) indicate that students feel emotionally safe, supported, and respected in their classrooms. *(RP, TIC)* ☐ Staff validate and reflect student identities and neurodivergent experiences through inclusive language, flexible routines, and accommodations that foster belonging. Classroom visuals and materials affirm diversity. *(ND, RP)* ☐ Classrooms display affirming visuals (e.g., "You Belong Here" signs), sensory-friendly options (e.g., quiet corners), and posted expectations that support emotional safety and predictable interactions. *(UDL, PBIS)* ☐ Staff reflect on their interaction ratios and classroom tone through video review, coaching conversations, or peer feedback, with documented improvements or intentional practices noted in team discussions. *(HLP, RP)*
2.2 Classroom procedures, routines, and transitions are collaboratively taught and reinforced using supports that empower students and promote their autonomy.	☐ Students help co-develop classroom procedures (e.g., arrival, clean-up, station transitions) at the beginning of the year through group discussions or visual routine mapping, with evidence of updates based on student needs and feedback. *(RP, HLP)* ☐ Classroom routines are taught using modeling, guided practice, and role-play activities. Lesson plans show intentional instruction of procedures, revisited at key points (e.g., after breaks). *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Visual schedules, task checklists, and social narratives are posted and accessible, enabling students to complete transitions and routines with reduced prompting. *(UDL, HLP)* ☐ Staff provide 4–5 positive, specific prompts or affirmations per instructional window (e.g., "Thanks for getting your materials so quickly"), reinforcing independent use of routines. *(PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Transition supports (e.g., peer buddies, self-monitoring checklists, regulation cues) are provided based on individual needs, with options reviewed in student planning meetings or noted in supports logs. *(ND, PBIS)* ☐ Routine reviews include student reflection activities (e.g., What's working? What needs to change?) captured through written reflections, surveys, or classroom meeting notes. *(RP, TIC)* ☐ Positive reinforcement systems (e.g., group acknowledgments, token boards, verbal praise) are documented

	and used to promote student autonomy. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Observations show that students begin and complete transitions (e.g., moving between activities, gathering materials) independently or with minimal prompting, demonstrating ownership of routines. *(HLP, ND)*
2.3 The physical space/layout is intentionally organized to support students' emotional, sensory, and learning needs, with clearly identified areas (e.g., regulation space, work area, collaborative space) to offer choice and flexibility.	☐ Classroom layout includes visibly labeled, purpose-driven areas (e.g., regulation space, independent work area, small group space), with signage or visuals that promote independent use and alignment to student needs. *(HLP, UDL)* ☐ A range of seating and workspace options (e.g., floor cushions, standing desks, rocking chairs) is available and visibly used by students based on preference or support need. *(ND, PBIS)* ☐ Sensory accommodations (e.g., lighting choices, fidgets, headphones, visual filters) are accessible and embedded within student workspaces; usage is based on student input and monitored for impact on engagement. *(ND, TIC)* ☐ A designated regulation or calming area is present, equipped with co-regulation tools (e.g., visuals, timers, sensory items) and used proactively by students, with staff prompting or modeling as needed. *(TIC, RP)* ☐ Students provide input into workspace preferences through surveys, conferences, or observations, and this feedback is documented and reflected in classroom layout or use patterns. (*ND, RP)* ☐ Visual supports (e.g., labels, directional signs, visual schedules) assist students in navigating and independently transitioning between spaces, promoting autonomy and self-management. *(UDL, HLP)* ☐ Layout and furniture placement are intentionally arranged to minimize auditory and visual distractions (e.g., barriers between work areas, low-noise zones). *(TIC, HLP)* ☐ Students move between spaces as needed (e.g., from independent to collaborative zones) based on task demands or regulation needs, and movement is embedded as a supported part of classroom routines. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)*
2.4 Learning time is optimized by creating focused, engaging learning opportunities that support individual and group needs. Staff actively move throughout the environment to provide support and connection.	☐ Lesson plans include explicit learning goals and success criteria, which are communicated visually and verbally; students are observed referencing or restating them, demonstrating understanding. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Students engage in a variety of learning formats (e.g., small group, stations, peer work, independent tasks) based on readiness, interests, or learning profiles as shown in instructional plans or grouping documentation. *(UDL, HLP)* ☐ Staff circulate continuously during instruction, providing proximity support, modeling, prompting, or feedback to maintain engagement and address needs. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Teachers adjust instruction in the moment (e.g., re-explaining, extending time, switching modalities) in response to student cues or understanding; adjustments are observed and/or noted in reflective lesson documentation. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Students are offered structured choices in materials, partners, order of tasks, or learning modalities, as seen in task menus, work systems, or visual supports promoting ownership and autonomy. *(UDL, ND)* ☐ Staff provide specific, constructive, and timely feedback aligned to goals, and students are observed responding to or applying that feedback to improve performance. *(HLP, PBIS)*

	☐ Instruction includes layered supports (e.g., sentence starters, guided notes, partner prompts, anchor charts) that are matched to student needs and fade as independence increases, evidenced in materials and student work. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Student participation (e.g., response frequency, time-on-task, number of task completions) is documented and reviewed via checklists, engagement sampling, or classroom data tools. *(PBIS, HLP)*
2.5 Sensory activities are personalized and offered based on the student's preferences, ensuring the student feels comfortable and willing to engage.	☐ Staff collect input through observations, preference assessments, student interviews, or caregiver feedback to determine individualized sensory preferences. *(PBIS, ND)* ☐ A range of sensory supports (e.g., noise-canceling headphones, fidgets, chewies, quiet corners, movement paths) is available throughout the learning environment and used as needed without restriction. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Sensory tools are integrated into academic and social routines (e.g., calming music during writing, flexible seating for group work, textured materials for literacy tasks), not limited to behavior management. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Sensory supports are seamlessly integrated into learning activities (e.g., flexible seating, calming music, or standing desks), and students are guided by visual cues, checklists, or tools to independently choose and use the supports that best meet their needs. (*ND, TIC*) ☐ Observations show that staff adjust sensory supports in response to student behavior, feedback, and engagement (e.g., modifying frequency, duration, or type of support). *(PBIS, ND)* ☐ Staff co-create or update sensory strategies with students, ensuring that tools and routines promote regulation and comfort rather than control or compliance. *(TIC, ND)* ☐ Sensory activities are incorporated proactively into classroom routines and transitions (e.g., brain breaks after tasks, sensory walks between activities), as documented in schedules or lesson plans. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Staff track and reflect on the effectiveness of sensory supports using observation notes, behavior logs, or student self-assessments to ensure continued relevance. (*PBIS, TIC*)
2.6 When students face challenges, they are met with empathy, validation, and intentional support to build resilience and persistence at their own pace.	☐ Staff consistently use nonjudgmental, validating language during student struggles, as evidenced by observation notes, behavior response scripts, or video recordings. *(TIC, RP)* ☐ Observations show staff guiding students through self-regulation strategies (e.g., deep breathing, movement, visual calming tools) instead of punitive responses. *(TIC, PBIS, ND)* ☐ Students are provided with and use individualized scaffolds (e.g., sensory tools, break cards, adult or peer check-ins) based on their regulation or stamina needs. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Staff involve students in structured problem-solving conversations using tools such as reflection sheets, social stories, or restorative prompts. (*RP, TIC*) ☐ Following conflict or behavioral incidents, debrief forms or logs show a focus on restoring relationships and reinforcing student dignity. *(RP, TIC)* ☐ Students receive specific, strengths-based feedback highlighting growth in persistence or regulation (e.g., sticker charts, reflection journals, positive calls home). *(HLP, RP)*

	☐ Student reflections, surveys, or feedback forms indicate they feel emotionally safe, understood, and supported when encountering academic or behavioral challenges. *(TIC, ND)* ☐ Staff consistently engage in supportive follow-ups with students after challenges (e.g., brief check-ins, restorative chats, encouragement notes), reinforcing that struggles are temporary, normal, and opportunities for growth. Documentation of these interactions reflects a commitment to ongoing emotional support. *(TIC, RP)*
2.7 The roles of paraeducators are clearly defined to promote student autonomy, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and develop the skills needed for greater independence and accessing less restrictive environments, while supporting effective, consistent classroom routines that prioritize student strengths and capabilities.	☐ Paraeducator responsibilities are clearly defined in written documents (e.g., staff handbooks, classroom plans) and consistently aligned with promoting student autonomy. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Paraeducators use planned fading strategies with task supports (e.g., task analysis strips, self-monitoring charts) to reduce adult dependence and increase student independence. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Evidence of regular teacher-paraeducator planning meetings (e.g., notes, logs, shared digital schedules) includes alignment of support strategies, routines, and goals. *(HLP)* ☐ Paraeducators consistently use classroom tools (e.g., visual schedules, problem-solving visuals, behavior response aids) to guide student engagement and task completion. *(PBIS, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Paraeducators promote peer interactions using aids such as social scripts, AAC supports, or partner prompts to increase natural social opportunities. *(RP, ND)* ☐ Paraeducators use job aids (e.g., visual checklists for routines, positive reinforcement guides) to promote consistency and reinforce predictable environments. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Observations show paraeducators prompting students to use their supports, make choices, problem-solve, and take initiative rather than completing tasks for them. *(HLP, ND, RP)*
2.8 Behaviors that impact the learning environment and interfere with accessing the least restrictive environment are described in the student's IEP and supported through individualized, proactive strategies outlined in a strengths-based PBSP, informed by comprehensive and current assessment data.	☐ The IEP includes a neutral, strengths-based description of how the student's behavior affects learning and access to the LRE, with a clearly linked behavior goal or support need. *(PBIS, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), ABC data, classroom observations, and stakeholder input (e.g., teachers, paras, related service providers, students) are used to develop and update the PBSP. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ PBSP includes clearly documented preventative supports and environmental modifications (e.g., structured breaks, visual cues, sensory supports) embedded into daily routines. *(PBIS, TIC, ND)* ☐ Plans prioritize teaching replacement behaviors, regulation strategies, and coping skills rather than solely eliminating undesired behaviors. *(PBIS, TIC, HLP, ND)* ☐ The PBSP focuses on teaching alternative skills rather than merely reducing behaviors, ensuring students gain autonomy and self-regulation strategies. ☐ Job aids (e.g., behavior flowcharts, co-regulation visuals, self-monitoring charts) are posted and used by staff to promote consistent implementation across settings. *(PBIS, RP, HLP)* ☐ Teams review behavior data (e.g., frequency, duration, intensity) at least biweekly and revise supports as needed based on student progress and team reflection. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Documentation shows shared ownership of PBSP implementation by teachers, paraeducators, and related

	service providers, with regular communication logs or check-ins. *(HLP, RP)* ☐ When appropriate, students are included in conversations about their PBSP and are supported in understanding and using their behavior tools and supports. *(ND, RP, TIC)*
2.9 Staff review and monitor progress on the Behavior Plan on an ongoing basis, minimally every two weeks, ensuring specific goals, dates, and measurement methods are documented. *Graphing or other visual representation methods are preferred for tracking progress and making data accessible.	☐ Team meeting notes, progress logs, or data summaries show that behavior plan progress is formally reviewed and discussed at least every two weeks. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Behavior Intervention Plans include time-bound, observable goals with clearly defined data collection methods (e.g., frequency, duration, latency). *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Data is visually represented—using tools like line charts, bar graphs, progress trackers, or behavior dashboards—to identify patterns and highlight progress in a way that is accessible to staff, families, and, when appropriate, students. *(HLP)* ☐ Staff regularly analyze behavior data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make timely adjustments, rather than waiting for annual IEP reviews. Documentation (e.g., meeting notes or behavior plan revisions) reflects data-driven changes based on emerging trends. *(PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Teachers, paraeducators, behavior specialists, and related staff collaborate during review meetings, as documented through shared logs or meeting records. *(HLP, RP)* ☐ Summaries or visual progress updates (e.g., progress graphs, simplified reports) are shared with families and students when appropriate. *(RP, PBIS, ND)* ☐ Any revisions to behavior strategies or goals are accompanied by written rationale grounded in collected data. *(HLP)* ☐ Teams use standardized behavior tracking forms, digital tools, or templates to ensure consistency and fidelity in data collection and review. *(HLP, PBIS)*

Evidence to Consider - Professional Responsibilities

Teacher Name: _____ *Date*: _____ *Time*: _____

Observer: _____ *Focus Area*: _____

Instructions for Use: • Check off the items consistently present or occurring in the classroom. • Select the highlights - It is not expected to see all items in one visit. • Evidence listed is not exhaustive and	**Alignment with High-Quality Educational Frameworks:** PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports RP = Restorative Practices TIC = Trauma-Informed Care HLP = High-Leverage Practices for Special Education ND = Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices

not every item is appropriate or expected for every student	
Professional Responsibilities	**Evidence to consider**
3.1 IEP supplementary aids and services (e.g., assistive technology, communication systems, visual supports, differentiated instruction, and individualized behavior supports) are prioritized and consistently implemented across all learning environments as stated in the IEP, ensuring students have access to their least restrictive environment.	☐ Lesson plans, classroom visuals, or support logs clearly show the implementation of IEP-specified supplementary aids and services (e.g., AT, visual schedules, behavior supports) across all settings. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observation or service tracking confirms that supports (e.g., AAC devices, visual prompts) are consistently used in general education, special education, and community-based environments per IEP documentation. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Students receive explicit instruction on how to use their assistive tech, communication systems, or accommodations, with observation or work samples reflecting growing independence. *(PBIS, TIC, ND)* ☐ Meeting notes, communication logs, or shared plans show collaboration among teachers, paras, and related service providers to ensure aligned and consistent use of supports. *(RP, HLP)* ☐ Staff complete training or coaching sessions focused on appropriate use and integration of IEP supports, as documented through PD logs or coaching follow-up. *(HLP, TIC)* ☐ Students are taught to identify when they need support and to request their accommodations in different settings, with prompts, scripts, or role-play activities embedded into instruction. *(RP, ND)* ☐ Teachers and support staff use visual guides, fidelity checklists, or cue cards to ensure supports are implemented with consistency and as designed. *(HLP)* ☐ Teams review data (e.g., progress logs, engagement records) to assess the effectiveness of supports and make IEP-aligned adjustments based on student response and need. (*HLP, PBIS*)
3.2 Instructional planning is intentional and strengths-based, addressing each student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs using data to maximize meaningful time in the least restrictive environment.	☐ Instructional plans highlight student assets, incorporating their interests, preferences, and skills as entry points for academic and SEL instruction. (*ND, HLP*) ☐ IEP goals, progress monitoring data, and student work samples are regularly reviewed to inform instructional decisions that promote meaningful inclusion in the LRE. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Lesson plans include strategies for emotional regulation, communication, and behavior alongside academic content (e.g., use of visuals, check-ins, or token boards). (*PBIS, TIC, ND*) ☐ Instruction incorporates Universal Design for Learning principles and includes scaffolds (e.g., sentence frames, peer models, AAC) to support access in inclusive environments. (*HLP, ND, PBIS*) ☐ Documentation (e.g., shared planning tools, meeting notes) shows that teachers collaborate with interventionists, therapists, and paraeducators to ensure aligned and coordinated support. (*HLP, RP*) ☐ Instructional plans include strategies like pre-teaching, embedded accommodations, and behavior supports that reduce the need for pull-out services or exclusionary practices. (*PBIS, HLP*) ☐ Lesson plans or artifacts show students participating in goal-setting, selecting learning activities, or using tools

	that reflect their interests and needs. (*ND, RP*) ☐ Teams review data regularly (e.g., biweekly check-ins, progress reviews) and make instructional adjustments that ensure ongoing growth and time in the LRE. (*HLP, PBIS*)
3.3 The special education team, inclusive of the general education teacher(s), collaborates and communicates proactively within the school community to foster an inclusive environment, challenge ableism, and support the success of all students.	☐ Schedules and planning logs show that general and special educators meet consistently to co-develop lessons, ensuring accommodations, modifications, and inclusive practices are embedded. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Professional development agendas and attendance records confirm staff participation in ongoing training on anti-ableist practices, equity in special education, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). (*HLP, RP, TIC*) ☐ Meeting notes and IEP participation logs verify active involvement of general education teachers in meetings, with documented input on accommodations, goals, and classroom implementation. (*HLP, RP*) ☐ Proactive communication with families and community members to gather diverse perspectives, foster partnerships, and create a supportive network that reinforces inclusive values beyond the classroom. (*RP, PBIS*) ☐ School improvement plans, mission statements, or program documents reference inclusive values, collaboration, and commitment to equity and access for all learners. (*PBIS, RP*) ☐ Staff meeting minutes or team reflections include discussion of classroom and schoolwide practices that reduce barriers, support access, and address bias or exclusion. (*RP, TIC, HLP*) ☐ Walkthroughs show general and special educators collaboratively delivering instruction, supporting students together, and modeling inclusive interactions. (*HLP, ND*)
3.4 Program-wide meetings are regularly scheduled, involving teachers, itinerants, and/or paraeducators, to enhance collaborative problem-solving and support effective IEP development and implementation.	☐ Meeting calendars and agendas show that instructional teams (e.g., teachers, itinerants, paraeducators) meet consistently to discuss student progress, share insights, and coordinate IEP implementation. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Staff use digital tools (e.g., shared drives, communication logs, Google Docs) to track student updates, document team communication, and align strategies across roles. (*HLP*) ☐ PD logs or staff sign-in sheets confirm that all team members receive ongoing training on communication, collaboration, and best practices in IEP development and implementation. (*HLP, RP*) ☐ Meeting notes and protocols reflect that paraeducators and itinerant staff have structured opportunities to contribute insights, suggest strategies, and inform student support decisions. (*RP, HLP*) ☐ Detailed notes from meetings (e.g., action steps, responsible team members, timelines) are stored in shared locations and revisited to ensure accountability and follow-through. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Student progress data (academic, behavioral, communication, or functional) is reviewed and discussed during team meetings, with instructional or support adjustments documented as outcomes. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Communication logs, surveys, or meeting records show how family or community feedback is gathered and shared with teams to inform inclusive planning and strengthen partnerships. (*RP, PBIS*) ☐ Teams use structured approaches such as Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), MTSS team protocols, or solution circles to address concerns and develop responsive interventions. (*HLP, RP, PBIS*)

3.5 Families are valued as essential team members, and ongoing, collaborative communication is established through multiple methods (e.g., notes home, classroom newsletters, sharing data) to keep them informed and engaged.	☐ Student progress is communicated using visuals, plain language summaries, or translated materials. Artifacts include progress snapshots, IEP goal updates, or growth graphs. (*HLP, PBIS*) ☐ Family communication includes positive news such as progress, participation, or personal wins. Celebration logs or message samples document this practice. (*PBIS, HLP*) ☐ IEPs and conference notes reflect that families are given meaningful opportunities to share insights and goals, with teams documenting how their input informs planning. (*HLP, RP*) ☐ Documentation confirms consistent family communication through multiple formats (e.g., email, phone calls, home-school journals, digital apps, newsletters), with flexible options, including in-person, virtual, written, and translated materials, offered to align with family preferences and needs. (*TIC, RP, ND*) ☐ Educators proactively reach out to families, not just for concerns but to celebrate student successes and milestones. ☐ Families are invited to join classroom activities, school events, or decision-making opportunities (e.g., input on classroom supports or school climate). Flyers, calendars, or sign-in sheets serve as evidence. (*RP, HLP*) ☐ Feedback from families is gathered through surveys, informal check-ins, or conversations, and responses are reflected in action steps or meeting notes. (*PBIS, RP*) ☐ PD logs show staff receive training on culturally responsive family engagement, active listening, and inclusive communication practices. (*HLP, TIC*)

Evidence to Consider - Program Principles

Teacher Name: _____ *Date*: _____ *Time*: _____

Observer: _____ *Focus Area*: _____

Instructions for Use: • Check off the items consistently present or occurring in the classroom. • Select the highlights - It is not expected to see all items in one visit. • Evidence listed is not exhaustive and not every item is appropriate or expected for every student.	**Alignment with High-Quality Educational Frameworks:** PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports RP = Restorative Practices TIC = Trauma-Informed Care HLP = High-Leverage Practices for Special Education ND = Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices
Program Principles	**Evidence to consider**

4.1 Classrooms embed culturally affirming practices and respect for diverse backgrounds, fostering an inclusive environment where all students feel a sense of belonging. Teaching practices are adapted to support every learner's unique strengths and needs.	☐ Disaggregated data (e.g., behavior referrals, inclusion rates) are reviewed by the team to ensure equity across race, culture, ability, and language. Action plans address any disparities. (*PBIS, RP, TIC*) ☐ Lesson plans and classroom resources include diverse languages, cultures, races, religions, and ability perspectives. Visuals, texts, and examples reflect students' identities and lived experiences. (*ND, RP*) ☐ Lesson plans reflect Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies that accommodate sensory, linguistic, cognitive, and cultural variability (e.g., flexible materials, options for response). *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Observations show students participating in cooperative tasks that support shared leadership, peer teaching, and equitable access to group roles. Group norms support inclusive participation. *(RP, HLP)* ☐ Teachers link academic content to student culture and family structures (e.g., integrating home traditions into writing prompts), as documented in lessons or student work samples. (*RP, HLP)* ☐ Visual aids, multi-step directions, and individual supports are provided to meet each learner's strengths and preferences, and are reflected in plans or accommodations logs. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Observers note a classroom environment that is physically and emotionally inclusive, with visual affirmations (e.g., identity posters, student work displays), consistent routines, and a sense of safety and belonging. *(TIC, RP)*
4.2 The school climate fosters a sense of compassion and responsibility for all students. It uses a trauma-assumed approach to support their autonomy and competence within a safe and supportive environment.	☐ Observations show staff consistently responding to student errors or behaviors with calm, regulated tone and body language. Fidelity tools or behavior scripts confirm consistency across environments. (*TIC, PBIS, HLP*) ☐ Staff handbooks, discipline procedures, and support plans reflect trauma-assumed values (e.g., regulation over punishment, relationship-first approach). Policies are accessible and actively used. (*TIC, HLP*) ☐ Classrooms and shared spaces include visible routines, behavior expectations, and regulation tools (e.g., calming corners, visual schedules) that promote physical and emotional safety. (*PBIS, TIC*) ☐ Students are seen making meaningful choices in academic, behavioral, and social tasks (e.g., materials, pace, roles), and these opportunities are included in visual supports or plans. (*ND, RP, PBIS*) ☐ Students are involved in addressing challenges through collaborative reflection (e.g., conflict resolution scripts, restorative chats), documented in behavior plans or SEL artifacts. (*RP, HLP*) ☐ School leaders collect and review student, family, and staff input on school climate using surveys, focus groups, or reflection tools, with resulting action steps documented. (*RP, PBIS, TIC*) ☐ Staff model compassionate language – Observers note consistent use of respectful, affirming language that emphasizes repair, growth, and student dignity during all interactions. (*HLP, TIC, RP*)
4.3 All program staff focus on providing meaningful opportunities for student growth and inclusion throughout each school day, addressing what is within our control	☐ The organization adopts comprehensive trauma-informed policies that guide interactions, discipline, and support services, ensuring all practices are sensitive to the effects of trauma. (*TIC, HLP*) ☐ Training records and professional development calendars show that all staff receive ongoing learning in trauma-assumed care, neurodiversity-affirming practices, and inclusive instructional strategies. (*HLP, TIC, ND*) ☐ Observations and classroom visuals show calm, welcoming spaces with posted routines, schedules, and expectations that promote student security and belonging. (*PBIS, TIC, ND*)

rather than external influences or barriers.	☐ Students are provided with authentic opportunities to make choices in their daily learning, routines, or behavior plans. Choice boards or logs document these opportunities. (*PBIS, ND, RP*) ☐ Staff involve students in resolving challenges related to academics or behavior, using structured tools like think sheets, problem-solving guides, or restorative chats. (*RP, HLP, ND*) ☐ Lesson plans and IEP progress notes prioritize skill-building and daily opportunities for participation over student background factors (e.g., home life, trauma history). Staff can describe their focus on "what we can do." (*HLP, PBIS, TIC*) ☐ School or program-wide data (e.g., student perception surveys, exit interviews, check-ins) is collected and reviewed to inform practices that support growth and inclusion. (*RP, PBIS*) ☐ Educators regularly reflect (e.g., in team meetings or journals) on how to remove or work around classroom-level barriers to inclusion, participation, and growth. Notes or action steps are documented. (*HLP, ND, RP*)
4.4 All program staff recognize the unique needs associated with disabilities and presume competence, designing strengths-based instruction responsive to each student's requirements.	☐ Lesson plans, instructional materials, and educator language reflect high expectations and presume that all students are capable of meaningful learning and growth. *(HLP, ND, RP)* ☐ IEP documents explicitly identify student strengths and describe how these are used to address areas of need (e.g., leveraging visual memory for task completion). *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Staff training logs and PD agendas include sessions on presuming competence, inclusive practices, and strengths-based instruction. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Observations and lesson plans reflect Universal Design for Learning principles, including varied modes of engagement, representation, and expression to ensure accessible instruction. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Notes from IEP or instructional team meetings show planning decisions centered on student assets, interests, and preferred learning styles. *(HLP, RP, ND)* ☐ Staff are observed giving specific praise that highlights individual strengths and effort. *(PBIS, RP)* ☐ Artifacts (e.g., self-assessments, goal charts, planning tools) show that students and/or their families help set personal learning goals that align with their strengths and preferences. *(ND, HLP, RP)* ☐ Educators document regular reflection on student progress and adjust instruction to ensure it remains strengths-based and responsive to evolving needs (e.g., lesson reflections, team discussions). *(HLP, PBIS)*
4.5 All program staff strive to create engaging and supportive learning environments where students are motivated and empowered to participate willingly.	☐ Learning targets and success criteria are posted, referenced by staff, and reflected in lesson plans so students know what they're working toward. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ Students are seen engaging in hands-on learning, peer discussions, or problem-solving tasks. Participation logs or instructional scripts include notes on strategies used to promote engagement. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observers note staff using student names, showing interest in student lives, and incorporating personal affirmations. Anecdotal records or SEL plans reflect efforts to build trust. (*RP, TIC, HLP)* ☐ Lesson content, classroom visuals, and discussion topics reflect diverse perspectives and learning styles. Staff ensure each student feels seen and valued. *(ND, RP, TIC)*

	☐ Observers see staff using quick assessments (e.g., thumbs up/down, whiteboards, exit tickets). Documentation shows these checks are used to adjust instruction. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Staff embed self-reflection questions and support students in evaluating their own learning (e.g., "What helped you succeed?"). Student journals, rubrics, or reflections are used as permanent products. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Collaborative activities (e.g., think-pair-share, jigsaw tasks) are observed and documented in plans. Grouping charts reflect intentional peer interaction. *(RP, HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Motivation & Autonomy Supported – Students are observed making choices in learning activities (e.g., task order, materials, roles), with choice boards or work systems documented in classroom tools. *(ND, PBIS)*
4.6 All program staff meet students where they are, honoring their pace and interests while following their lead to teach essential skills.	☐ Lesson plans and data sheets show that staff regularly assess and reflect on each student's current understanding, skills, and readiness to determine next instructional steps. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Students are strategically grouped based on shared learning needs, interests, or pacing, with documented rationale in plans or group charts that adjust over time. *(HLP, ND, PBIS)* ☐ Staff use varied, student-centered instructional approaches (e.g., visual supports, hands-on tasks, storytelling, technology) tailored to learning preferences and documented in planning materials. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Students are observed selecting learning activities, materials, or task formats (e.g., working with a partner, choosing a topic), and choice boards or visual menus are available as permanent products. *(ND, RP, PBIS)* ☐ Observations show students working at their own pace, with flexible timing, adjusted expectations, or breaks embedded. Lesson scripts or behavior notes confirm individualized pacing strategies. *(HLP, TIC, ND)* ☐ Walkthroughs show educators joining students in their focus area (e.g., using student-initiated play, noticing and expanding on student curiosity) to build skills in the moment. Anecdotal notes capture these moments. *(HLP, ND, RP)*
4.7 All program staff seek to understand why behavior occurs before attempting to change it.	☐ Behavior intervention plans, behavior logs, or team notes define the target behavior in specific, observable, and measurable terms (e.g., "throws materials when presented with writing task" rather than "noncompliant"). *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Observations, frequency/duration logs, or direct observations related to triggers and reinforcers to behavior are gathered to reflect when, where, and how often the behavior occurs. *(HLP, PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Documentation shows teams have analyzed behavior data to identify setting events, antecedents, and maintaining consequences. Behavior summaries include identified triggers or patterns. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Teams develop and document hypotheses about the likely function(s) of behavior (e.g., access, escape, attention, sensory) and ensure all staff understand and use this hypothesis to inform supports. *(HLP, PBIS, ND)* ☐ Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs) include proactive environmental modifications, replacement behavior instruction, and reinforcement strategies clearly aligned to the behavior's hypothesized function. *(HLP, PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Staff prioritize teaching alternative skills rather than focusing solely on reducing the behavior (e.g., teaching how to request a break instead of punishing escape behaviors). Instructional strategies are noted in plans.

	(HLP, PBIS, ND) ☐ Behavior plan development includes team-based input (e.g., from teachers, related service providers, and family members), documented through meeting notes or consultation summaries. *(RP, HLP)* ☐ Behavior analysis includes consideration of trauma, neurodivergence, and context (e.g., overstimulation, unpredictability, communication barriers). Notes reflect assumptions beyond compliance. *(TIC, ND)*
4.8 All program staff value student self-advocacy and their communication in any form over forced compliance.	☐ Observations show staff consistently acknowledge and respond to verbal, nonverbal, AAC, gestures, or behavior-based communication as valid expressions of needs, preferences, or boundaries. *(ND, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Lesson plans, visual supports, or classroom routines include structured opportunities for students to make choices, express preferences, or decline participation (e.g., "Would you like to work here or there?"). *(ND, RP, PBIS)* ☐ Plans and scripts show direct instruction of self-advocacy skills such as requesting help, expressing discomfort, setting boundaries, or asking for clarification. *(HLP, ND)* ☐ Observers do not see strategies that prioritize control over communication (e.g., withholding AAC, requiring eye contact, ignoring protests). Instead, student autonomy is respected in real-time decisions. *(TIC, ND)* ☐ Student voice is reflected in classroom routines, IEP documents, and planning tools. Staff can describe how they gathered and used student input. *(RP, HLP, ND)* ☐ Behavior intervention plans and progress notes reflect communication-based supports, emotional regulation goals, and proactive strategies—rather than punishment or compliance demands. *(PBIS, TIC, ND)* ☐ Students receive positive feedback for using their voice (e.g., "Thanks for letting me know you need space."). Logs or reflections capture these moments and how staff reinforce autonomy. *(HLP, RP, ND)* ☐ Staff debrief after challenging moments and review whether student autonomy was supported. Documentation (e.g., team notes, staff reflections) shows active alignment with student-centered practices. *(TIC, RP)*
4.9 All program staff use de-escalation strategies that prioritize safety, relationships, and dignified alternatives, ensuring that students are supported with respect and care, especially during moments of crisis.	☐ Staff demonstrate understanding of the impact of trauma on behavior by using calm, patient, non-punitive language during challenging moments. Observations or behavior scripts show trauma-informed de-escalation in action. *(TIC, HLP, RP)* ☐ Staff can explain and demonstrate non-coercive, evidence-based de-escalation methods (e.g., active listening, offering choices, maintaining space). Training logs or fidelity checklists confirm completion and use. *(PBIS, HLP, TIC)* ☐ Lesson plans, classroom visuals, and reinforcement systems show that proactive, positive behavior supports are in place to reduce the likelihood of escalation. *(PBIS, HLP)* ☐ For students with known behavioral needs, positive behavior support plans (PBSPs) or individualized de-escalation plans include triggers, preferred responses, and calming strategies—and are accessible to all staff. *(HLP, PBIS, TIC)* ☐ Observations show staff prioritizing connection and regulation over control during challenging moments (e.g.,

	kneeling to eye level, using soft tone, offering wait time). *(TIC, RP)* ☐ Staff conduct debriefs after behavioral incidents to reflect on what worked and what could be improved; documentation includes team notes, student input (when appropriate), and updated supports. *(HLP, RP, PBIS)* ☐ Observations or walkthrough tools show staff consistently applying de-escalation strategies aligned with district protocols and student-specific plans. Staff provide consistent, respectful responses. *(HLP, PBIS)* ☐ Behavior tracking forms or crisis event logs include data on antecedents, staff response, duration, and outcomes. This data is reviewed to adjust interventions and improve staff response. *(HLP, PBIS, TIC)*