

# Supporting Students with Disabilities

## Secondary Super Strategies | INTRODUCTION

### Who are Students with Disabilities?

- T**he Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines the term 'disability,' with respect to an individual as -
1. a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
  2. a record of such an impairment; or
  3. being regarded as having such an impairment.

When designing support strategies for students with disabilities, it is important to consider the wide range of students that qualify under this special population and the unique barriers they face. Support services and accommodations should be tailored to each individual student based on their personal strengths, interests, and career goals. Educational staff can play an essential role in the success of students with disabilities by providing appropriate academic support, self-advocacy, and skill development instruction.

### DID YOU KNOW?

During FY19 in Illinois, the percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) made up 16% of the total student body with a 70% graduation rate.<sup>1</sup>



## Students with Disabilities Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide professional development and training to all staff and students on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
  - √ Section 504 and ADA lay out the rights of individuals with disabilities and prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in all programs or activities.
  - √ Informing the entire student body of such laws not only assists in lessening the stigma for students with disabilities but may create allies within their peer group.
- Help inform parents on their child's rights as a student and on available supports and services.
- Encourage teachers to participate in professional development and training around Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
  - √ UDL is an evidence-based framework for individualizing instruction that provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for all learners.
- Build structures to increase collaboration among teaching staff.
  - √ Provide common planning time each week for general education, special education, and CTE teachers.
  - √ Include special education and CTE teachers in training on standards, curriculum, and assessments.
  - √ Provide training for general education and CTE teachers on interpreting IEPs and implementing instructional accommodations.
- Use high-quality curriculum and assessments to monitor progress of all students toward grade-level standards.
- Teach students strategies on self-advocacy to assist them in asking for needed accommodations in coursework.
- Develop partnerships with local service providers to cover gaps in services that the school does not or cannot provide.



## Students with Disabilities Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify and implement specially designed supports and services based on the academic and functional needs of each student, not just their diagnosis.
- Monitor student progress and adjust intensity and frequency of supports and services for students accordingly.
- Inform staff and students on the importance of people-first language as a way to convey that you recognize the student first, and the disability as a component or aspect of the student's personality.
- Create and promote an inclusive school environment.
  - √ Ensure that all areas of the school are accessible to students with physical disabilities.
  - √ Ensure students with disabilities have equal access to and are encouraged to participate in all extracurricular activities, field trips, and social activities.
- Inform students about the different career options within career and technical education (CTE) and how they can get started during high school.
  - √ Partner with your local community college for CTE career exploration days.
  - √ Inform students of supports and services available at the college for students with disabilities.
  - √ Emphasize potential earnings and timelines for completion.

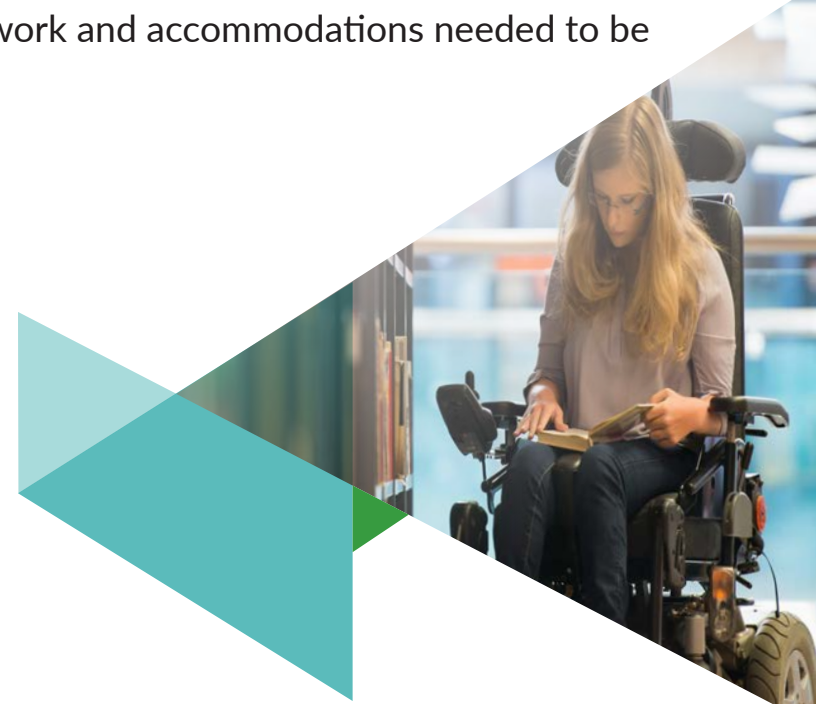
### DID YOU KNOW?

During the same fiscal year in Illinois, the most represented areas of disability were as follows: specific learning disability, 34%; speech or language impairment, 16%; developmental delay, 13%; other health impairment, 13%; and autism, 9%.<sup>2</sup>



## Students with Disabilities Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore career aptitude testing resources to help students explore career options.
- Meet with the student's IEP team to discuss enrollment in CTE coursework and accommodations needed to be successful. An IEP team could consist of:
  - √ student
  - √ student's family members
  - √ guidance counselor
  - √ career counselor
  - √ special education case manager
  - √ CTE teacher



### SOURCES:

- <sup>1</sup> Illinois Report Card: Graduation Rate. (2019). Retrieved June 2, 2020 from <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx?source=trends&source2=graduationrate&Stateid=IL>.
  - <sup>2</sup> Illinois Report Card: Students with IEPs. (2019). Retrieved June 2, 2020, from <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx?source=studentcharacteristics&source2=iep&Stateid=IL>.
  - <sup>3</sup> Louisiana Department of Education. (2020). Strategies for Success: A Guidebook for Supporting Students with Disabilities. retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/students-with-disabilities/strategies-for-success-a-guidebook-for-supporting-students-with-disabilities.pdf>.
  - <sup>4</sup> National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. (2018). Quick Guide: Career and Technical Education & Secondary Youth with Disabilities. Developed for NTACT by Dawn A Rowe, Caroline MaGee, Ruth Allison, Deanne Unruh, & Charlotte Alverson.
- <sup>2</sup> Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.