High-Leverage Practices: Empowering Your Teachers

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IESE Network Updated Objectives

To enhance educators' effectiveness in supporting students with disabilities through professional learning, skill development, and coaching in high-leverage practices (HLPs).

To enhance the effectiveness and collaboration of instructional leaders through professional learning in HLPs.

To increase the engagement of families as partners in the educational process and decision-making.

To build seamless and sustainable delivery systems for students with disabilities utilizing professional learning and technical assistance focused on HLPs.

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

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Agenda

- Review elements of sustainable school districts that promote progress of SWD
- Brief HLP Overview
- Building an action plan that empowers teachers to implement HLPs

Exhibit 14. Essential Elements and Facilitators of a Sustainable School System that Promote Progress for Students with Disabilities



(Anderson et al., 2025)

Essential Elements Breakdown

Student Belonging

Evidence-Based General Curriculum & Core Instructional Programming

Individual Instructional & Support Needs

Staff Collaboration

Support Educators

Facilitators

Family Engagement

Educational Leaders

High Expectations

Collective Efficacy

Data Literacy

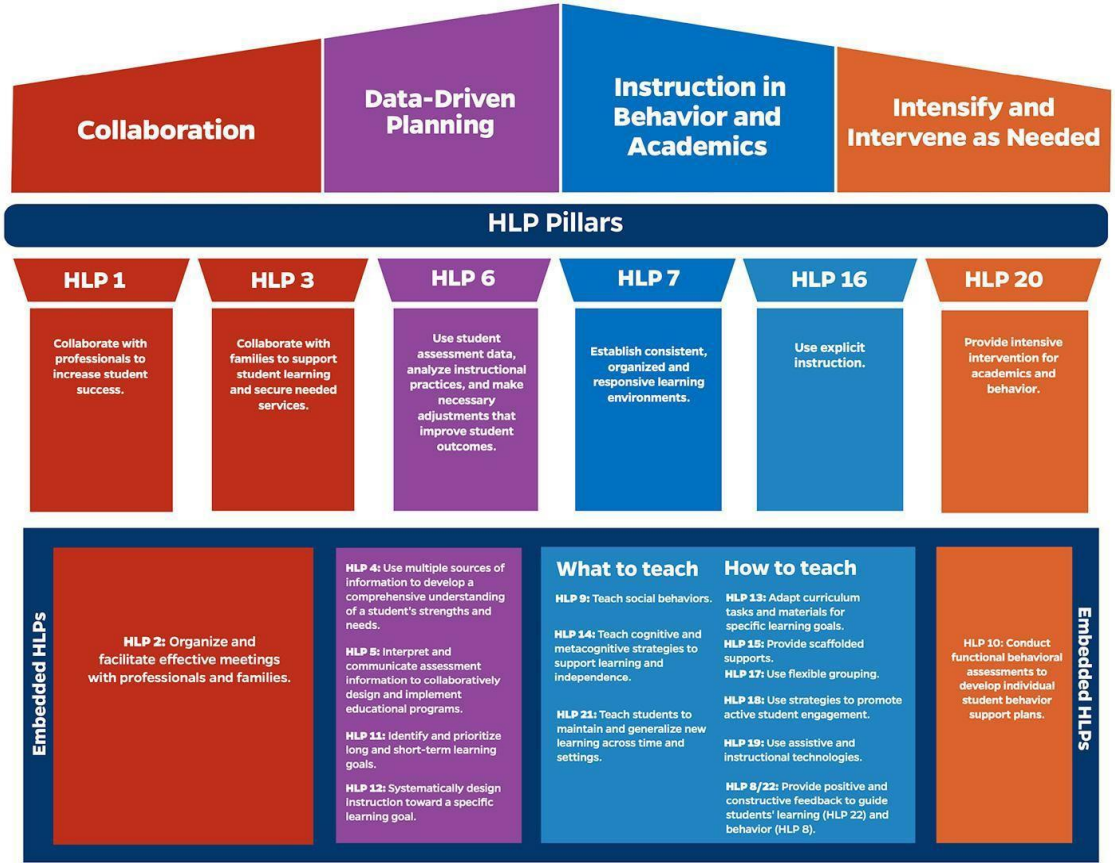
(Anderson et al., 2025)

Practices Most Closely Linked to Improved Outcomes

- Planning and conducting professional development
- Conducting coaching sessions that consist of ongoing cycles of observing, modeling, performance feedback, and using alliance strategies

(Pierce & St. Martin, 2023)

HLPs: Domains One through Four



Domain 1: Collaboration

Pillar HLP 1: Collaborate with professionals to increase student success

Embedded HLP 2: Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families

Pillar HLP 3: Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services

Embedded HLP 2: Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families

Domain 2: Data-Driven Planning

Pillar HLP 6: Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.

Embedded HLP 4: Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.

Embedded HLP 5: Interpret and communicative assessment information to collaboratively design and implement educational programs

Embedded HLP 11: Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals

Embedded HLP 12: Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal

Domain 3: Instruction in Behavior and Academics

Pillar HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and responsive learning environment.

Pillar HLP 16: Use explicit instruction.

What to Teach

Embedded HLP 9: Teach social behaviors.

Embedded HLP 14: Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence

Embedded HLP 21: Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.

Domain 3: Instruction in Behavior and Academics, cont.

Pillar HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and responsive learning environment.

Pillar HLP 16: Use explicit instruction.

How to Teach

Embedded HLP 13: Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.

Embedded HLP 15: Provide scaffolded supports.

Embedded HLP 17: Use Flexible Grouping.

Embedded HLP 18: Use strategies to promote active student engagement.

Embedded HLP 19: Use assistive and instructional technologies.

Embedded HLP 8/22: Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning (22) and behavior (8).

Domain 4: Intensify and Intervene as Needed

Pillar HLP 20: Provide intensive instruction for academics and behavior.

Embedded HLP 10: Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior plans.

Actionable Steps to Support Educator HLP Implementation

Steps

1. HLP Prioritization
2. Professional Learning & Support
3. Resource Library
4. Evaluation and Data Tracking
5. Action Items & Next Steps

Prioritizing HLPs

- Pillar HLPs
- Individualized by teacher
  - Coaching
  - Professional Learning Plan
- Based on district and/or school priorities

HLP Focus for Coaching

HLP 6: Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.

HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and responsive learning environment.

HLP 16: Use explicit instruction.

Professional Learning & Support Systems

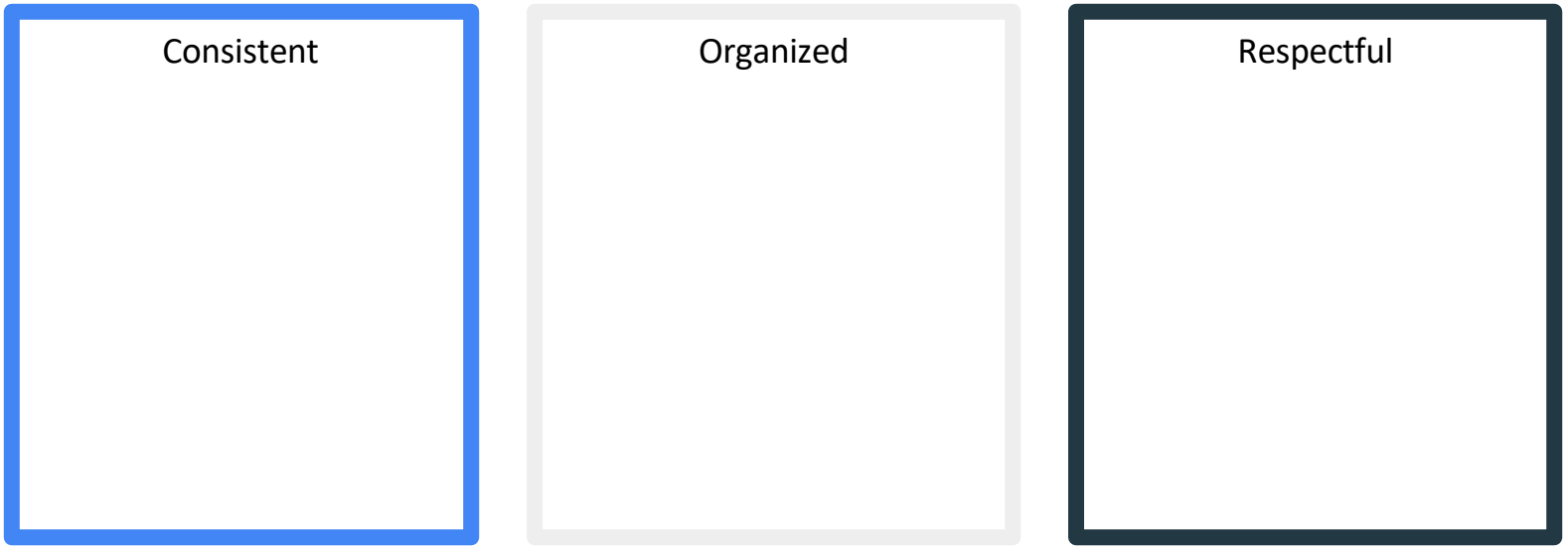
Design job-embedded and differentiated learning opportunities for mastery

- Professional learning (growth) plans
- Coaching Cycle

Using HLPs within Your Coaching System

HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and responsive learning environment.

HLP 7: Establish a



learning environment.

Pillar HLP 7 Rubric

Rating	Expectations	Organization	Teacher Tone	Structure	Student Characteristics	Teacher Feedback
Highly Effective	Class norms, expectations and rules are always positively stated, reflecting the cultures, values, and beliefs of students and families from various ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds represented in the school. Students consistently collaborate to develop classroom norms, expectations, and rules. Class norms, expectations and rules are visibly posted, and always explicitly taught and reviewed.	Classroom layout, Organization systems always have structure. Daily agendas are always posted and discussed. Class procedures and routines are always explicitly taught and positively reinforced.	The teacher's tone and language are always consistently encouraging, patient, positive, and respectful.	Instruction always includes structured student down time.	Teachers always demonstrates an understanding that behavior is a form of communication, and uses this knowledge to interpret and respond to a student's behavior in the classroom.	Feedback is always timely, constructive, specific, and consistently positive.

(TTAC Online, 2025)

Organization

From the rubric: “Classroom layout, Organization systems always have structure. Daily agendas are always posted and discussed. Class procedures and routines are always explicitly taught and positively reinforced.”

- Classroom Layout
  - Think about walkways, desk organization, center areas, small group instruction areas, alternate work spaces, etc.
- Organization Systems
  - Think about materials, online systems, student data systems, etc.
- Agendas
  - Is it posted?
  - Are changes within the weekdays reflected?
  - How are we adding more major changes?
- Routines & Procedures

Things That May Need a Procedure

Primary

Lining up

Class bathroom breaks

Art supplies

Transitioning from carpet to desk/table

Secondary

Locker use

Monitoring school email

Office hours

Both

Leaving to use restroom / water

Unpacking / packing up

Getting materials

Handing out materials

Getting a tissue

Walking in the Hall

Collecting phones

Getting out technology

Logging in to class systems

Class discussions

Turning in materials

Early Finishers

Teacher Tone

From the rubric : “The teacher's tone and language are always consistently encouraging, patient, positive, and respectful.”

- Is this challenging? If so, when is this challenging?
- What gets in the way of a positive tone? How do we navigate these challenges?
- What tools can we use to self-regulate our tone?

Teacher Feedback

From the rubric: “Feedback is always timely, constructive, specific, and consistently positive.”

- Timely
  - We want to minimize instances in which students are practicing doing something wrong.
  - We want to allow for an immediate opportunity to correct and practice correctly when something is wrong.
- Constructive & Specific
  - These two go hand in hand. What do they mean to you?
- Positive
  - Think back to tone.

HLP 16:
Explicit Instruction

Sixteen Elements of Explicit Instruction

1. Focus instruction on critical content
2. Sequence skills logically
3. Break down complex skills & strategies into smaller instructional units
4. Design organized & focused lessons
5. Begin lessons with a clear statement of the lesson goals AND your expectations
6. Review prior skills & knowledge BEFORE beginning instruction
7. Provide step-by-step demonstrations
8. Use clear, concise language
9. Provide an adequate range of examples & non-examples
10. Provide guided and supported practice
11. Require frequent responses
12. Monitor student performance closely
13. Provide immediate affirmative & corrective feedback
14. Deliver the lesson at a brisk pace
15. Help students organize knowledge
16. Provide distributed & cumulative practice

(Archer & Hughes, 2011)

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Key Components

- ➔ Segment Complex Skills
- ➔ Draw Attention to Important Content Features
- ➔ Engage Students & Fade Prompts
- ➔ Provide Response Opportunities with Feedback
- ➔ Create Purposeful Practice Opportunities

(Hughes et al., 2017)

RESET RUBRIC

Teaching Procedures	7	The teacher **effectively** reviews prior skills and/or engages background knowledge **before beginning** instruction.	The teacher reviews prior skills and/or engages background knowledge **before beginning** instruction, **but not effectively.**	The teacher **does not** review prior skills and/or engage background knowledge **before beginning** instruction.
	8	The teacher **provides clear** demonstrations of proficient performance.	The teacher **does not provide clear** demonstrations of proficient performance.	The teacher **does not provide any** demonstrations of proficient performance.
	9	The teacher **provides an adequate number** of demonstrations given the nature and complexity of the skill or task.	The teacher **does not provide an adequate number** of demonstrations given the nature and complexity of the skill or task.	The teacher **does not provide** demonstrations.
	10	The teacher uses language that is **clear, precise, and accurate** throughout the lesson.	The teacher uses language that is **not always clear, precise, and accurate**.	The teacher uses language that is **confusing, unclear, imprecise, or inaccurate** throughout the lesson.
	11	Scaffolding is provided **when it is needed** to facilitate learning.	**Some** scaffolding is provided, but **more is needed** to facilitate learning.	Scaffolding **is needed, but minimal or no** scaffolding is provided to facilitate learning.
	12	Complex skills or strategies **are broken down** into logical instructional units to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.	Complex skills or strategies **are not effectively broken down** to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.	Complex skills and strategies **are not broken down as needed** into logical instructional units to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.
	13	The teacher **systematically withdraws** support as the students move toward independent use of the skills.	The teacher withdraws support, but **it is not withdrawn systematically.**	The teacher **does not withdraw** support; **OR** the teacher provides very limited support and then **abruptly withdraws** it.

(Moylan et al., 2017)

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Scaffolding

Implemented-3	Partially Implemented-2	Not Implemented-1
Scaffolding is provided **when it is needed** to facilitate learning.	**Some** scaffolding is provided, but **more is needed** to facilitate learning.	Scaffolding is **needed, but no** scaffolding is provided **to facilitate learning.**
Examples: • The teacher transitions from decoding work to reading connected text by having students highlight the target words in the text prior to reading them in context. • In a vocabulary lesson the teacher provides a student-friendly explanation and illustrates meaning with examples and non-examples. • Students are provided with an acronym to support application of steps for solving word problems.	Examples: • The teacher effectively provides scaffolding for students by reading with students to support fluency. However, scaffolding is needed for finding the main idea, and it is not provided. • Cues are present, but they are not applied consistently. • A visual model is placed on the board to support students' ability to decompose fractions. However, the features of the model are not explicitly explained to students.	Examples: • Scaffolding is needed to support finding main idea and details. The teacher has students number paragraphs, but then it is not used to facilitate finding main idea. • The teacher pauses occasionally to ask students to put their finger on the next sentence. Students are unable to locate their place. • The teacher repeatedly reminds students, "Don't forget your equation," but does not provide a checklist or any supports for students to remember the requirements.

(Moylan et al., 2017)

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Breaking Down Complex Skills

Implemented-3	Partially Implemented-2	Not Implemented-1
Complex skills or strategies **are broken down** into logical instructional units to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.	Complex skills or strategies **are not effectively broken down** to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.	Complex skills and strategies **are not broken down as needed** into logical instructional units to address cognitive overload, processing demands, or working memory.
Examples: • The teacher systematically stops at the end of each paragraph in the passage and prompts students to summarize, providing support as needed. • The teacher guides students to use a graphic organizer to connect concepts and ideas about the topic. • Students apply a step by step strategy to write a well constructed paragraph. • The teacher consistently and systematically guides students through a multi-step procedure for solving word problems.	Examples: • The teacher attempts to break the concept into manageable chunks but the progression is confusing and steps are inconsistent. • The teacher stops occasionally to ask questions while reading, but not often enough to allow for students to develop full understanding of the text. • Instruction progresses from cubes to bar model and then bar model to number line, but the progression lacks some steps that would provide a more cohesive connection.	Examples: • The teacher has the students read the passage all the way through without monitoring comprehension. • Students are asked to compare fractions, but they are not provided with logical steps to consider as they look at fractions. • Students are given multiple step instructions that are too complex and detailed for them to follow.

(Moylan et al., 2017)

Building Your Resource Library

Identify and secure the necessary infrastructure to enable sustained HLP use.

How can you organize resources for educator access?

IESE Network's Compiled Resource List

Evaluation & Data Tracking

Category	Evaluation Tool/Method	Frequency
Teacher Knowledge	HLP Self-Assessment Tool	Pre/Post
Coaching Dosage	Coaching logs and implementation checklists	Monthly
Student Outcomes	Progress toward IEP goals and academic growth in reading/math	Quarterly
Student Placement	LRE placement data	Annually

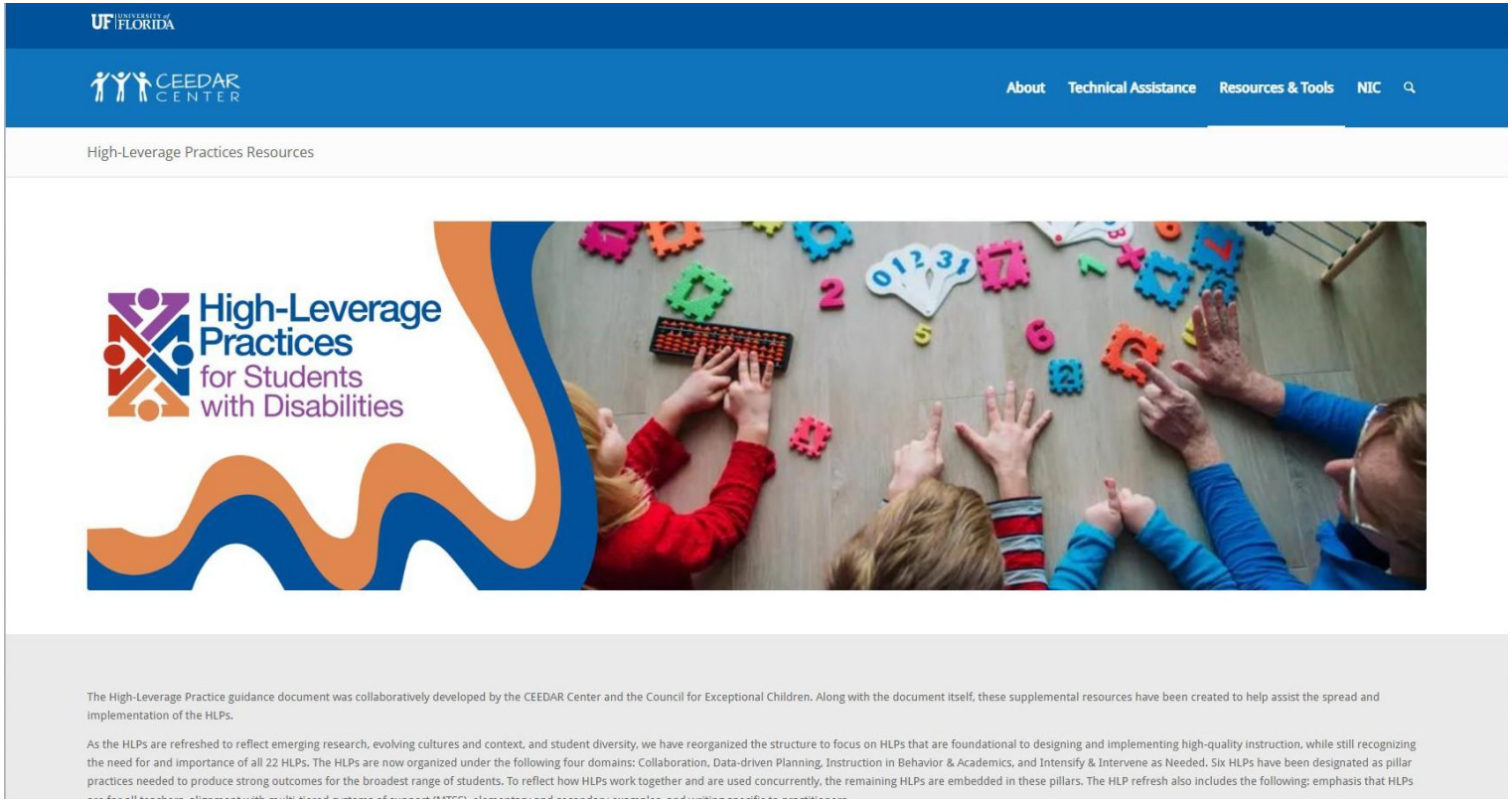
Action Items & Next Steps

- Communication
- Resource Distribution
- Baseline Assessment
- Schedule Follow-Up Meeting

Action Plan Example

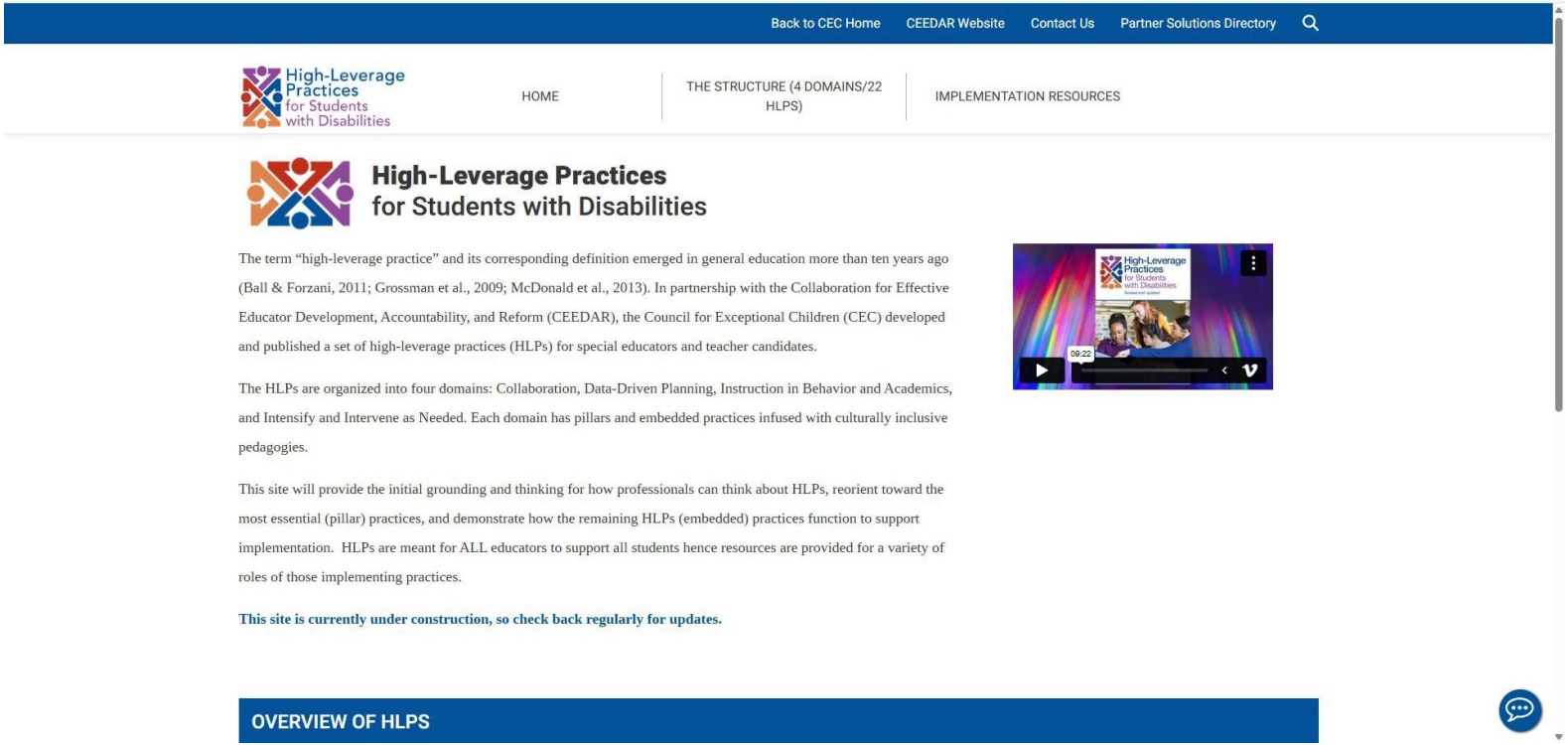
Resources At-A-Glance

CEEDAR's HLP Content



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CEC's HLP Website

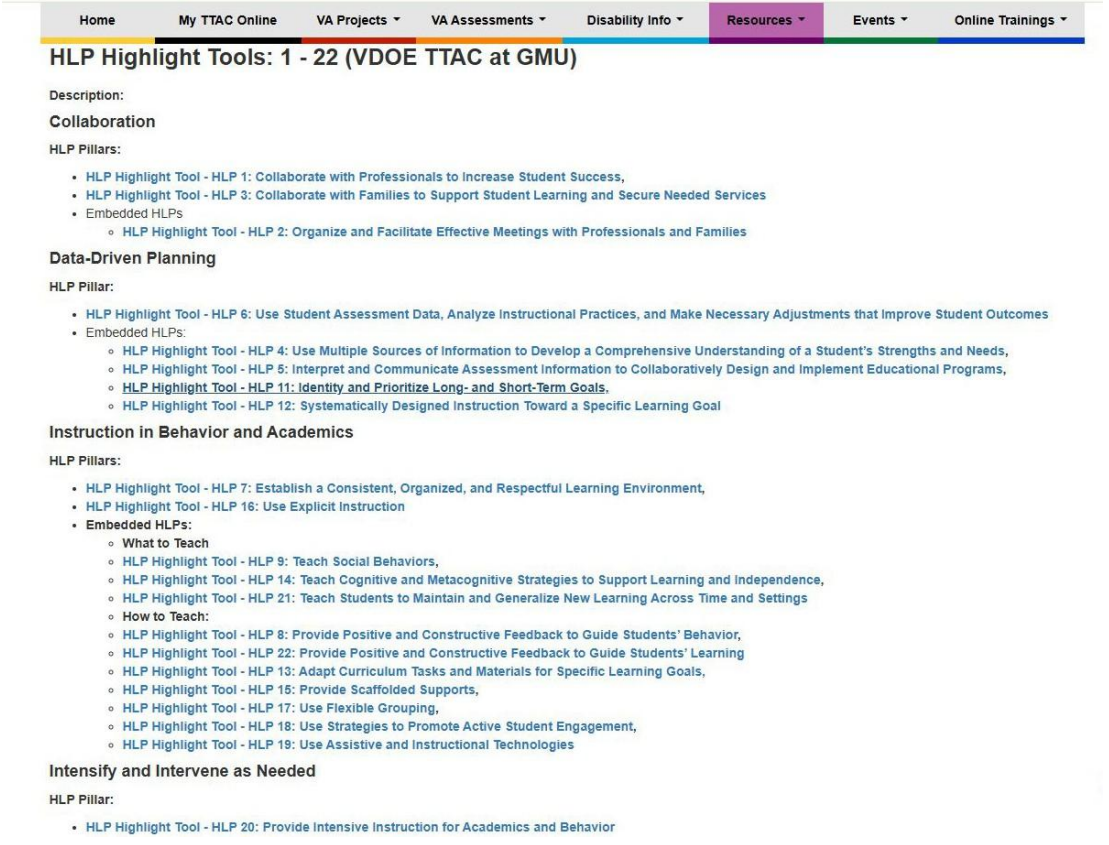


HLP Texts


High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities
Revised and Updated
HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES for Inclusive Classrooms
SECOND EDITION
EDITED BY
James McLeskey
Lawrence Maheady
Bonnie Billingsley
Mary T. Brownell
Timothy J. Lewis
HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES and Students with Extensive Support Needs
HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES for Intensive Interventions
Ruby L. Owiny
Kyonna E. Cornelius
The Practical Guide to High-Leverage Practices in Special Education
SLACK Incorporated

HLP Highlight Tools - TTAC Online

Highlight tools include video examples, rubrics for most HLPs, and additional tools and resources.



Home | My TTAC Online | VA Projects | VA Assessments | Disability Info | Resources | Events | Online Trainings

HLP Highlight Tools: 1 - 22 (VDOE TTAC at GMU)

Description:

Collaboration

HLP Pillars:

- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 1: Collaborate with Professionals to Increase Student Success,
- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 3: Collaborate with Families to Support Student Learning and Secure Needed Services
- Embedded HLPs
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 2: Organize and Facilitate Effective Meetings with Professionals and Families

Data-Driven Planning

HLP Pillar:

- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 6: Use Student Assessment Data, Analyze Instructional Practices, and Make Necessary Adjustments that Improve Student Outcomes
- Embedded HLPs:
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 4: Use Multiple Sources of Information to Develop a Comprehensive Understanding of a Student's Strengths and Needs,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 5: Interpret and Communicate Assessment Information to Collaboratively Design and Implement Educational Programs,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 11: Identity and Prioritize Long- and Short-Term Goals,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 12: Systematically Designed Instruction Toward a Specific Learning Goal

Instruction in Behavior and Academics

HLP Pillars:

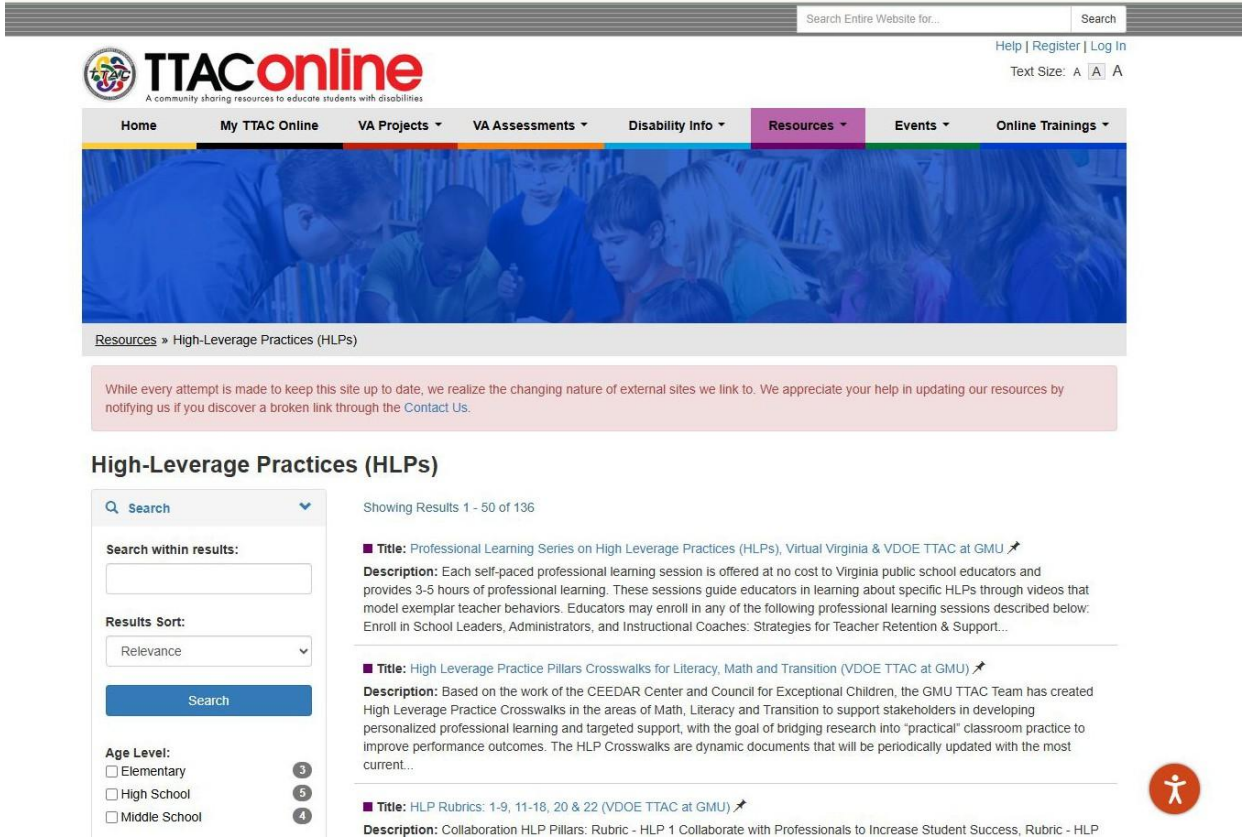
- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 7: Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment,
- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 16: Use Explicit Instruction
- **Embedded HLPs:**
  - **What to Teach**
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 9: Teach Social Behaviors,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 14: Teach Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies to Support Learning and Independence,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 21: Teach Students to Maintain and Generalize New Learning Across Time and Settings
  - **How to Teach:**
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 8: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide Students' Behavior,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 22: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide Students' Learning
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 13: Adapt Curriculum Tasks and Materials for Specific Learning Goals,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 15: Provide Scaffolded Supports,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 17: Use Flexible Grouping,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 18: Use Strategies to Promote Active Student Engagement,
  - HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 19: Use Assistive and Instructional Technologies

Intensify and Intervene as Needed

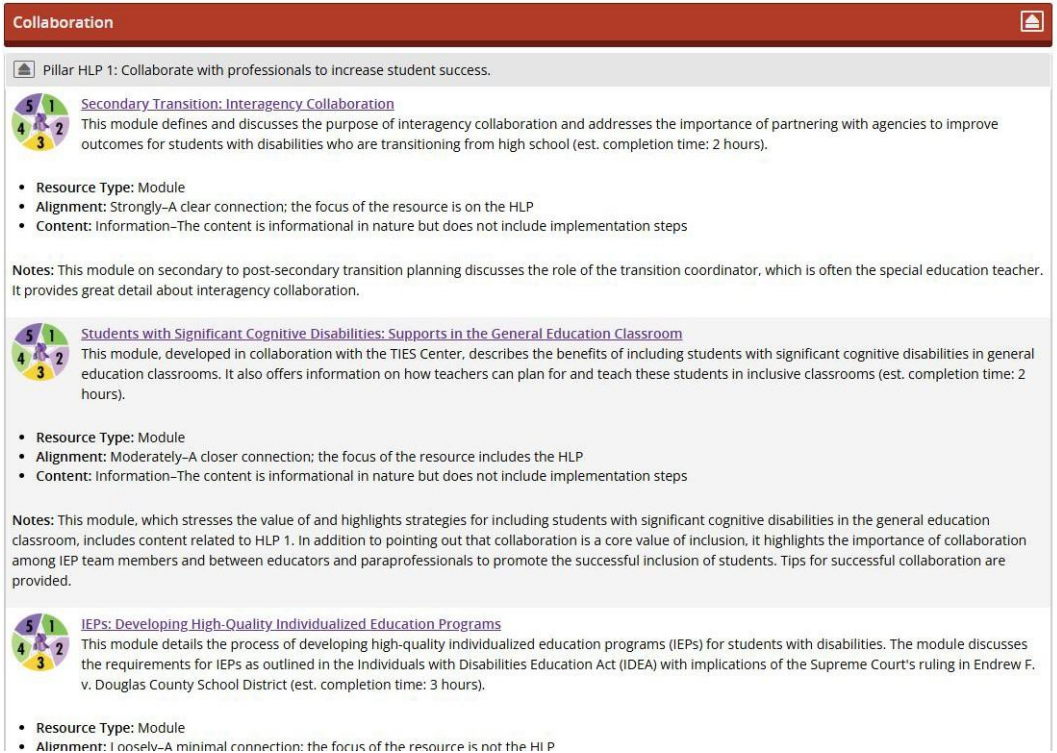
HLP Pillar:

- HLP Highlight Tool - HLP 20: Provide Intensive Instruction for Academics and Behavior

TTAC Online HLP Resources



HLP-Iris Center Alignment Tool



Collaboration

Pillar HLP 1: Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.

Secondary Transition: Interagency Collaboration

This module defines and discusses the purpose of interagency collaboration and addresses the importance of partnering with agencies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities who are transitioning from high school (est. completion time: 2 hours).

- **Resource Type:** Module
- **Alignment:** Strongly–A clear connection; the focus of the resource is on the HLP
- **Content:** Information–The content is informational in nature but does not include implementation steps

Notes: This module on secondary to post-secondary transition planning discusses the role of the transition coordinator, which is often the special education teacher. It provides great detail about interagency collaboration.

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Supports in the General Education Classroom

This module, developed in collaboration with the TIES Center, describes the benefits of including students with significant cognitive disabilities in general education classrooms. It also offers information on how teachers can plan for and teach these students in inclusive classrooms (est. completion time: 2 hours).

- **Resource Type:** Module
- **Alignment:** Moderately–A closer connection; the focus of the resource includes the HLP
- **Content:** Information–The content is informational in nature but does not include implementation steps

Notes: This module, which stresses the value of and highlights strategies for including students with significant cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom, includes content related to HLP 1. In addition to pointing out that collaboration is a core value of inclusion, it highlights the importance of collaboration among IEP team members and between educators and paraprofessionals to promote the successful inclusion of students. Tips for successful collaboration are provided.

IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs

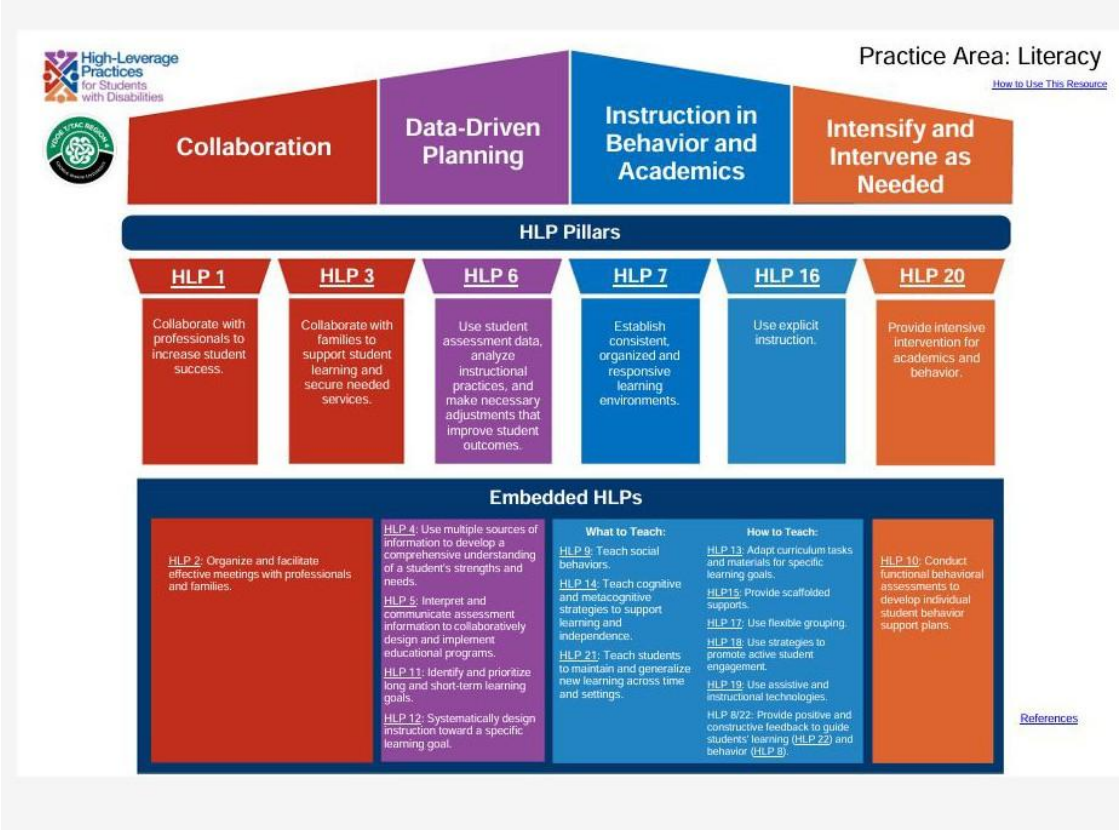
This module details the process of developing high-quality individualized education programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities. The module discusses the requirements for IEPs as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with implications of the Supreme Court's ruling in Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (est. completion time: 3 hours).

- **Resource Type:** Module
- **Alignment:** Loosely–A minimal connection; the focus of the resource is not the HLP

Content Crosswalks

Math

Literacy



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