Learning Acceleration

Office of Special Education

Overview

An executive report released by the United States Department of Education (USED) Office for Civil Rights, Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students, indicated that "many elementary and secondary school students with disabilities, [were] significantly disrupted [by COVID-19]". The disruptions included their "education and related aids and services needed to support their academic progress and prevent regression. And there are signs that those disruptions may be exacerbating longstanding disability-based disparities in academic achievement" (2021). Learning acceleration is an ongoing instructional process by which educators engage in formative practices to improve students' access to and mastery of grade-level standards. The goal of learning acceleration extends beyond recovering the ground lost to COVID-19; it must be viewed as a long-term, comprehensive framework that anchors districts' academic, social, and behavioral interventions to the common purpose of promoting global competitiveness for all students.

Data and Statistics

82%

of respondents for an **American Institutes for Research (AIR) survey** said it was "more difficult" or "substantially more difficult" to deliver special education instructional and accommodation supports during the pandemic.

8-10%

increase of learning loss for students of color in both reading and math, as reported by **National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD).**

22

states saw **declining graduation rates** among students with disabilities in 2020-21, compared with 10 states the previous year.

Promising Practices

1 Increase Practice Intensity

Studies have shown that an increase in practice yields improved outcomes for special education students. This can be measured by the number of practice repetitions, also known as trials or productions. For individual sessions, this can yield results of almost 10 times greater opportunity for remediation than in small or large group models for intervention. The High Impact Tutoring Toolkit (2021), reported:

- A recent meta-analysis of randomized evaluations of tutoring programs found that, on average, tutoring increased achievement by an additional 3 to 15 months of learning across grade levels.
- Another review of almost 200 rigorous studies found that high-dosage tutoring is one of the few school-based interventions with demonstrated large positive effects on both math and reading achievement.
- A 2017 study examined interventions that aimed to improve educational achievement for elementary and middle school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Of all the interventions examined, including feedback and progress monitoring, cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, and mentoring of students, tutoring was most effective.

2 Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL), multiple modalities, and small group instruction.

UDL and multiple modalities for instruction can support accelerated approaches. Teachers should use UDL to design flexible learning environments that anticipate learner variability and provide alternative pathways into the curriculum. Teachers should also adapt approaches to accelerated learning to reflect the strengths and areas of growth for each student.

Resources

New Jersey Department of Education: Learning Acceleration Principles

The National Student Support Accelerator and the Texas Education Agency: High Impact Tutoring Toolkit

Office of Special Education: Universal Design for Learning