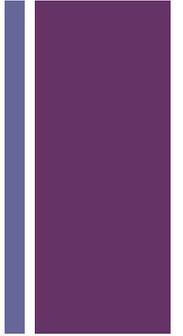# Improving Outcomes for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities Through a Process of Renewal

Today we will…

- Understand the renewal process

- Identify key leadership strategies

- Describe the Life Learning program in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District

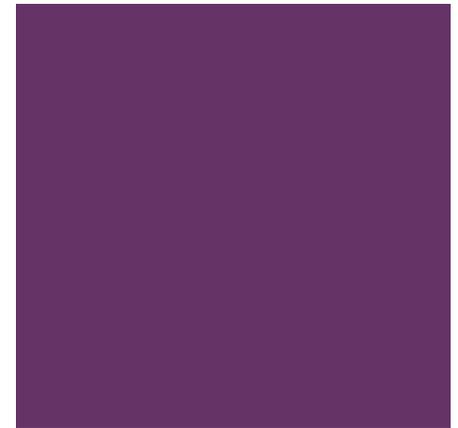- Apply what we learn to our own contexts

Life Learning Program Renewal

West Linn-Wilsonville School District

School Board Goals

- Grow student achievement through the use of high leverage instructional strategies, that raise rigor for all students while closing achievement gaps.

- Align systems of accountability, assessment, and evaluation to support the West Linn-Wilsonville vision of excellence.

Improving Instructional Practices

How do we create learning communities for the greatest thinkers and most thoughtful people...for the world?

Creating More Inclusive Cultures

Increasing Student Voice

Special Education Department Areas of Focus

+ Background

- Life Learning program
    - K-12 with primary, middle and high programs
    - Primarily serving students with needs in adaptive and communication skills
    - Modified or alternate curriculum

+ Renewal process

- Began with questions around curriculum resources

- Expanded into a renewal process in all areas
  - Curriculum
  - Assessment
  - Evidence-based practices
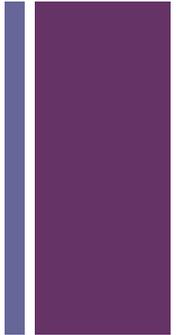 - Environment, structures and expectations
  - Inclusive cultures
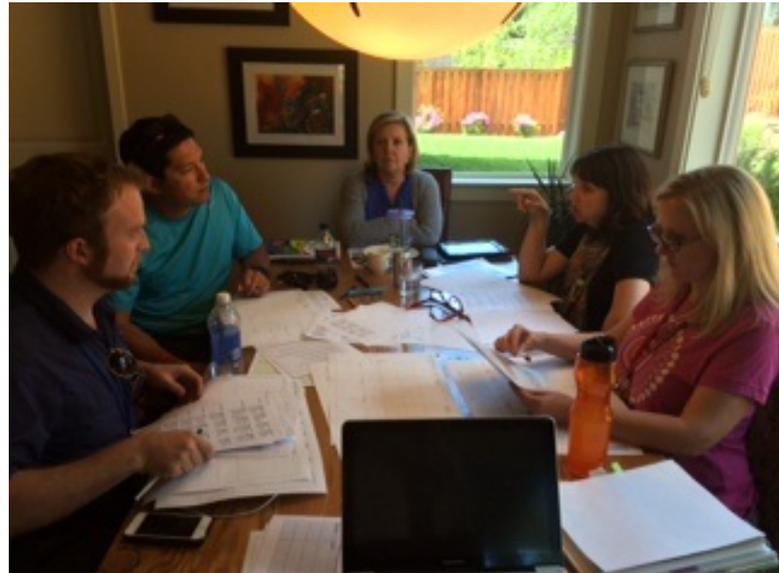
+ Renewal process

- Curriculum Review

- 3-day Summer Curriculum Camp

- Full-day Fall Camp continuation

- Outside professional development

- Monthly teaming and professional development

- Bi-monthly support for individual teachers

Keys strategies

- Teacher voice in the process

- Growth mindset for everyone

- Partnership with building principals

- Strong professional development

- Side-by-side support

- Completing the work in context

- Perseverance and celebration

+ Key strategies
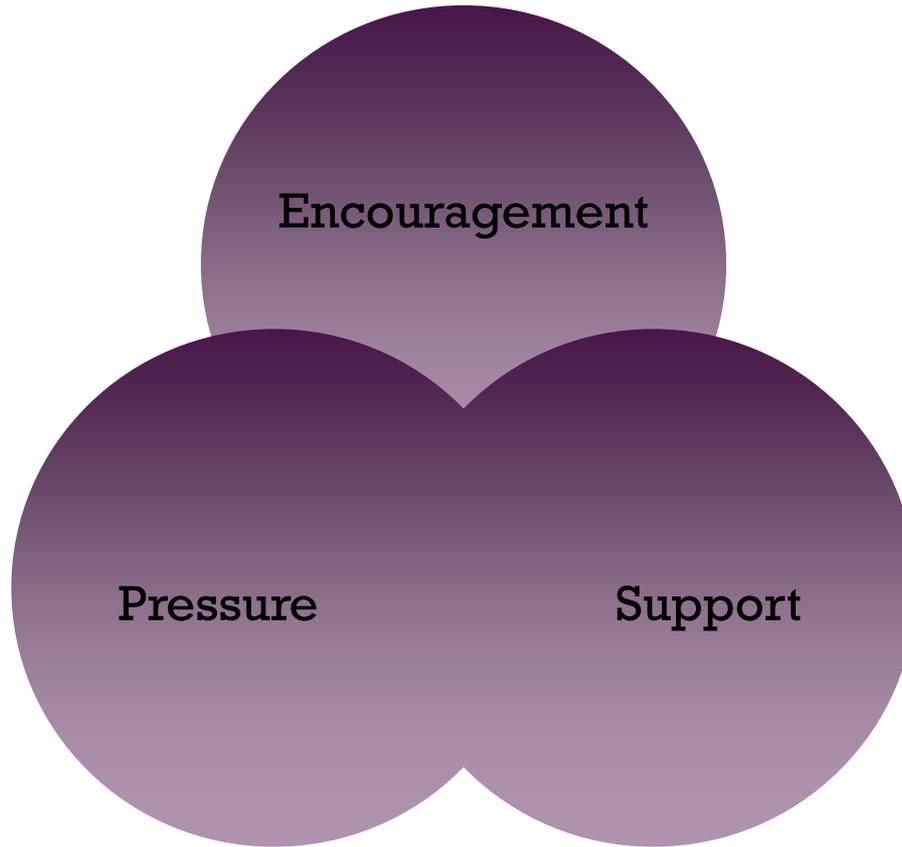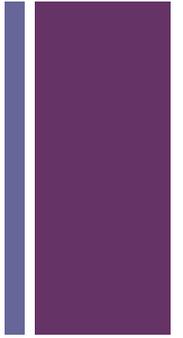
What is our model?

Life Learning Program

- Communication
- Independence
- Inclusive cultures
- Academic rigor

Life Learning Program

- Communication
  - Every student has a communication system throughout their day

- Independence

- Inclusive cultures

- Academic rigor

Life Learning Program

- Communication
  - Every student has a communication system throughout their day

- Independence
  - Instruction in skills of independence, including functional routines

- Inclusive cultures

- Academic rigor

Life Learning Program

- Communication
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  - Instruction in skills of independence, including functional routines

- Inclusive cultures
  - There is intention around the development of inclusive cultures, with specific outcomes

- Academic rigor

Life Learning Program

- Communication
  - Every student has a communication system throughout their day

- Independence
  - Instruction in skills of independence, including functional routines

- Inclusive cultures
  - There is intention around the development of inclusive cultures, with specific outcomes

- Academic rigor
  - Academic instruction is based on the CCSS
  - Curriculum resources are of high-quality, and articulated K-12

Communication

- Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist

- Expertise in Assistive Technology

- Augmentative communication

- SETT processes

- Professional development and training for special education and general education teachers, SLPs, instructional assistants, and peers

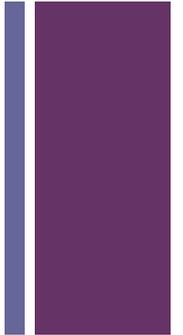- High expectations for progress supported by data
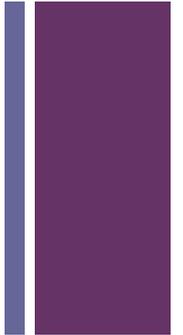
+ Independence

- Communication systems

- Functional routines

- Visual supports

- Effective assessments and instructional resources
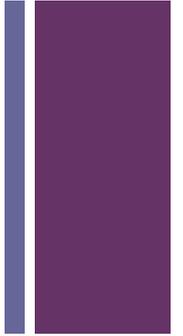
- Gradual release

- Peer supports

Inclusive Cultures

- Every student partnered or included in general education classes

- Development of friendships

- Peer helpers and buddies

- Work with building administrators around school-wide systems

- Unified activities
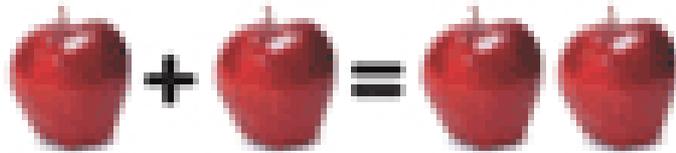
- Professional development for staff
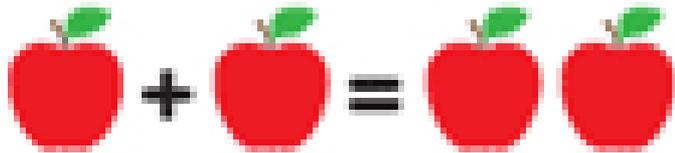
Inclusive Cultures: Project Unify

- Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is an education and sports based strategy powered by an engaged youth community that increases athletic and leadership opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities, while creating communities of acceptance for all.
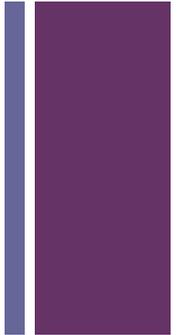
+ Academic rigor

Concrete

Semi-Concrete

Abstract

1+1=2

- Appropriate curriculum

- Balance between skill development and application

- High expectations

- Professional development

- Connection to the CCSS and general education curriculum

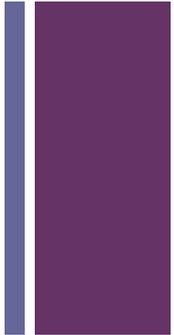**+** Connection to my district

+ Curriculum resources

- Range of texts, with an increase in non-fiction texts at accessible readability levels

- Ablenet Equals Math

- FACTER

- STAR

- Unique Learning Systems

- In review:
  - Phonetic and sight word based reading resources
  - High interest, age appropriate texts for secondary students

- And…a range of resources for individual learners

+ High leverage strategies

LIFE LEARNING PROGRAM RENEWAL
High-leverage strategies

Purpose • Student Engagement • Curriculum & Pedagogy • Assessment for Student Learning • Classroom Environment & Culture

- **Communication, communication, communication!**
  - Every student should have a functional communication system throughout their day, in all settings.
  - Students have a variety of supports for communication, both low and high tech, based on individual needs, and the communication demands of the situation.
  - Staff and peers will be trained in facilitating communication with students and their systems.

- **Increase independence**
  - If a student can complete a task independently, then they should. Always.
  - If needed, support is given initially to teach expectations and routines, then faded.
  - Visuals are the first go to for fostering independence, rather than adult assistance.

- **Build an inclusive culture**
  - Every student is enrolled in a general education class and has two teachers.
  - Opportunities for building friendships and generalizing skills are created intentionally.
  - Peers receive support and training to understand student's strengths and learning targets.
  - Participation in co-curricular activities is an expectation for all students.

- **Know your targets!**
  - Learning targets are be clearly articulated, visible to all, linked to standards, embedded in instruction, understood by students and general education teachers, and measureable. The teaching points should be based upon IEP goals in relation to the learning target. Everyone needs to know the targets and share in the responsibility for reaching them.

- **Live a growth mindset**
  - Expect substantive intellectual engagement. This means tasks should be of high quality and cognitively demanding. Skills instruction should be embedded in meaningful, relevant learning experiences.
  - Everyone is a learner. Professional development for teachers, IAs, and peers is critical.

- **Student talk**
  - Students need multiple opportunities to communicate, to respond, to practice, and to synthesize what they are learning.
  - The person who is doing the communicating is doing the learning.

- **Choose wisely--methodology and curriculum count**
  - Instructional materials and methodology should be appropriately challenging and supportive; aligned with the learning targets and standards; and culturally and academically relevant. Whenever possible, they should connect with the CCSS and general education content, language, and habits of thinking and communicating.

- **Assess well, assess frequently**
  - Assessment methods should include a variety of tools and approaches to gather comprehensive and quality information about the student that will inform instruction.
  - Students should be involved in assessing their own learning.

- **Visuals abound**
  - Students will learn how to use visual supports independently in a range of settings.

- **Make the hidden explicit**
  - Even within a constructivist pedagogy, there is an important role to instruction that is explicit and systematic. This includes providing models of proficient problem-solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback and frequent cumulative review.

LIFE LEARNING LITERACY, MATHEMATICS, ARTS & SCIENCES
High leverage strategies / Foundational ideas

Purpose • Student Engagement • Curriculum & Pedagogy • Assessment for Student Learning • Classroom Environment & Culture

- Connection to meaningful contexts. All literacy instruction is connected to the purposes of reading and writing, and connected to general education topics and content.
- Increase amount of instruction to access informational texts. This includes close reading strategies, building academic vocabulary, and use of evidence to inform or make an argument. (CCSS Shifts in ELA & Literacy)
- Focus on generalization and application of skills. Progress is gained when it is evident in a variety of settings.
- Progress is monitored and instruction is adjusted frequently and appropriately.
- Connection to meaningful contexts. All mathematics instruction should be meaningful and relevant beyond the task at hand.
- Concrete-Semi-Concrete-Abstract: Students should access content in all three ways.
- Vocabulary development is huge! Key vocabulary are identified and pre-taught with intention, and connected to meaningful content.
- Collaboration with general education teachers is necessary to provide supports in identifying key concepts, learning targets and adapting content, when necessary.
- General education teachers provide multiple entry points for students in order to access classroom content.
- Materials are provided that are appropriate to student's age as well as ability level.

| Core Instructional Resources	Core Assessments
- Texts matched to reader (need more of—especially in non-fiction, match with CCSS; read-alouds,) - STAR - **Need: Early Literacy Skills Builder?** - Unique Learning System - Ablenet Equals Mathematics - FACTER - Handwriting Without Tears - General education units of study - Bookshare Read to Go (access tool) - SOLO (access software) - Co-Writer - Intellitools Classroom Suite - Tarheel Reader - Mindwings Story Grammar Marker (literary elements, comprehension, writing: organization, ideas and content) - ReadWell - **Need: Sight Word Program—PCI** - **Need: Phonics based reading**	- SBAC / Extended Assessments - FACTER - NWEA MAP - AIMsweb - IRI's - Analysis of student writing - Curriculum based measures - **Need: Formal or informal reading assessment/probe (look at First Steps continuum? FACTER? IRIs?)** - **Need: Math probe (money, time, etc.)** - **Writing probe (check unique)**

+ Results
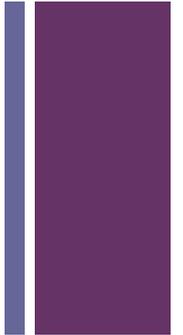
- Increase in inclusive cultures

- Increase in student communication

- Increase in independence

- Increase in access to general education content

- Increase in alignment of program

- Increased satisfaction by parents

- And…we still have a long way to go!

- Need to:
  - Continue to increase communication systems
  - Continue to increase student independence
  - Continue to improve instructional strategies
  - Continue to provide ongoing support, pressure, and encouragement
 - Continue to focus on creating inclusive cultures

+ Results

- *(My child) looks forward to going to school each day, and I think that speaks volumes in itself. It's a place where she is comfortable and happy. She talks about going to (her first grade) class and about friends coming to (her program) class, so the back and forth interaction and opening up of the teaching environments has been impactful for her. We love the co-teaching, knowing that (my child) is being exposed to grade-level curriculum in a way that is meaningful to her. I can't say enough how excited we are about the learning opportunities that will arise for all the students because of the inclusive practices you are putting in place!*

  - *Parent posting on classroom blog*
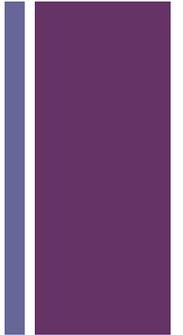
+ Next steps

- Additional curriculum resources

- Professional development and training

- Increase inclusive cultures

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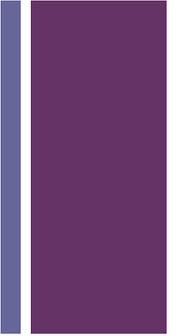
My three take-aways

+ Questions?

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