HTPD Level Indicators for Special Education Teachers

A Practical Guide for Identifying and Supporting Special Education Teacher Growth

Positive Student Relationships and High Expectations

- Builds authentic trust with students, families, paraprofessionals, and service providers.
- Maintains high expectations for growth, even when academic progress is slow or uneven.
- Balances care and challenge for every learner.

Effective Routines and Procedures

- Creates flexible, predictable classroom systems that support student independence and accommodate frequent transitions.
- Builds routines that allow learning to continue smoothly even when services, therapies, or unexpected changes occur.

Content and Performance Standards: Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

- Designs instruction that remains connected to grade-level content standards while honoring each student's individualized IEP goals.
- Creates challenging but attainable learning experiences that allow students to experience productive struggle without setting them up for failure.
- Implements accommodations and/or modifications as needed to maintain accessibility and appropriate challenge.
- Uses ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to ensure that instruction leads to measurable progress toward IEP goals—not just task completion.

Authentic Student Engagement

- Delivers instruction that captures student interest and promotes active participation, not passive compliance.
- Adjusts strategies in real time to keep students connected to meaningful learning goals.

Differentiated Instruction and Decisions Based on Data

- Uses ongoing data (academic, behavioral, observational) to inform instructional decisions day by day.
- Offers multiple pathways for students to access, engage with, and demonstrate learning—without lowering expectations.

Rigor and Relevance

- Engages students in cognitively demanding tasks that stretch thinking and apply to real-world contexts.
- Ensures that accommodations support—not replace—rigor and complexity.

Student-Directed Learning

- Creates environments where students set goals, monitor their own progress, and advocates for their learning needs.
- Releases responsibility intentionally while maintaining high support and high expectations.