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COMPASS TEACHER RUBRIC

Resource for Evaluators of Teachers of Students with Significant Disabilities

All students can achieve rigorous learning goals – including students with significant disabilities. The purpose of Compass is to ensure that all teachers receive high-quality feedback and professional development to support them in improving their practice and helping students achieve such goals. Evaluators play a critical role in providing teachers with these opportunities, through observations and feedback conversations.

Because of their unique and complex educational needs, students with significant disabilities require learning goals and instructional strategies which differ from those of students without disabilities. Compass is intended to define the core elements of effective instruction, while accounting for these important differences. This resource is intended to support evaluators of teachers of students with significant disabilities in maximizing the potential of Compass as a tool to drive educator professional development and student growth. This document is not intended to replace the Compass Teacher Rubric or other Compass resources; rather it is intended to provide supplemental guidance to evaluators to help them:

1. Work with teachers to set rigorous, meaningful goals for students with significant disabilities;
2. Develop a common understanding of the evidence of instructional practice and student learning reflective of *Highly Effective* performance; and
3. Discuss specific, actionable feedback that is informed by students' special needs and targeted to the teacher's individual areas of growth and strength.

SECTION I: Setting Rigorous Student Learning Goals

All teachers set rigorous goals for their students, based on a clear understanding of the standards expected of students and their particular needs in meeting those standards. As part of Compass, teachers articulate these goals into at least two student learning targets.

Strong student learning targets will look different from teacher to teacher. There are, however, certain characteristics that all strong student learning targets share:

1. They prioritize standards-aligned content;
2. They represent rigorous – ambitious, but achievable – goals for students; and
3. They are measured by high-quality assessments.

When working with students with significant disabilities, teachers should apply these principles to their goal-setting process by ensuring student learning targets:

- Help students shift to a general curriculum/academic focus;
- Take Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) into account;
- Support communication and literacy skill development, as appropriate;
- Consider data available on students' prior performance (e.g., past IEP progress reports, LAA1, previous classroom tracking data); and
- Identify the most appropriately rigorous assessment available (e.g., The Bridge Assessment, Brigance, Staugler Literacy Rubric, monitoring checklists).

To view an exemplar student learning target for students with significant disabilities, click here.

SECTION II: Supplemental Examples of *Highly Effective* Performance

The following examples are intended to be illustrative and to provide descriptions of possible evidence of *Highly Effective* performance in classrooms of students with significant disabilities, aligned to each of the five components of the Compass Teacher Rubric.

***Highly Effective* Description**	**Possible Examples for Students with Disabilities**
Component 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes	
All outcomes represent rigorous and important learning in the discipline. The outcomes are clear, written in the form of student learning, and permit viable methods of assessment. Outcomes reflect several different types of learning and, where appropriate, represent opportunities for both coordination and integration. Outcomes take into account the varying needs of individual students.	***Highly Effective* performance includes evidence that the teacher is working towards rigorous learning outcomes for all students in the class, aligned to the individual needs of each student, such as:** • Individual student's learning objectives are at a level of rigor matched to each student's current level of functioning • Goals for students are aligned across student learning targets, IEPs and lesson objectives
Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures	
Instructional time is maximized due to efficient classroom routines and procedures. Students contribute to the management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or the handling of materials and supplies. Routines are well understood and may be initiated by student.	***Highly Effective* performance includes evidence that the teacher has engineered the classroom environment and provided individualized supports to students to ensure an optimal learning environment in which students' independence is maximized, such as:** • Classroom routines and procedures lead students to maximize their independence through a variety of age-appropriate methods (e.g., daily schedule provided in a format accessible to individual students, direct instruction on self-management strategies provided as needed, practice on taking leadership in class activities). • Assistive technology devices, specialized equipment, and other support materials are embedded into routine operation of the class and are used to scaffold student independence (e.g., physical navigation of the classroom/daily routines). • The teacher plans to provide guidance/support for students on the use of self-managed time, tailored to individual students' needs (e.g.,

	students have access to academically engaging, self-managed activities when they finish an activity prior to peers).
Component 3b: Questioning and Discussion Techniques	
Teacher uses a variety or series of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, advance high level thinking and discourse, and promote meta-cognition. Students formulate many questions, initiate topics and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.	***Highly Effective*** **performance includes evidence that the teacher uses a variety of questioning and discussion techniques which take into consideration students' receptive and expressive communication support needs, <u>such as:</u>** • The teacher supports all students to communicate, (verbally or through a communication system such as a voice output system, manual signing, oral speech, picture communication,) to initiate and respond to questions during instructional activities and routines. • Students engage in discussion (comment, ask/answer questions) with their peers using appropriate supports (e.g., instructional, assistive technology). • Teachers and students communicate with one another using students' modes of communication (e.g., verbal, assistive technology, sign language).
Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning	
Virtually all students are intellectually engaged in challenging content, through well-designed learning tasks, and suitable scaffolding by the teacher, and fully aligned with the instructional outcomes. In addition, there is evidence of some student initiation of inquiry, and student contributions to the exploration of important content. The pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed to intellectually engage with and reflect upon their learning, and to consolidate their understanding. Students may have some choice in how they complete tasks and may serve as resources for one another.	***Highly Effective*** **performance includes evidence that the lesson has been designed to afford multiple opportunities for student engagement in all aspects of the lesson, <u>such as:</u>** • Accommodations (e.g., assistive technology supports, high and/or low) and modifications are embedded within the context of the environment and instructional routines, and are available to support engagement in learning by all students as needed. • Students are provided individualized supports to make choices (e.g., identifying preferences at job site, determining order of tasks to complete, selection through eye-gaze of menu of options, indicating preference for sequence of daily routine through picture schedule manipulation) across the instructional day, environments, content areas, and activities. • Students are provided age-considerate accessible instructional materials aligned to their learning needs and instructional activities

	(e.g., high school materials are age-appropriate but have been substantially modified for use by students at an emergent or very early literacy level). • Students are provided individualized accommodations and modifications to participate in the same/similar activities as their peers, with differentiation of expectations based on student needs (e.g., multiple students with a wide range of abilities may be engaged in a literacy lesson, with one student focused on developing basic decoding skills, one focused on using assistive technology effectively to navigate/comprehend the text, and other focused on grasping a repeated story line in a substantially modified adaptation of the text).
Component 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction	
Assessment is fully integrated into instruction, through extensive use of formative assessment. Students appear to be aware of, and there is some evidence that they have contributed to, the assessment criteria. Students self-assess and monitor their progress. A variety of feedback, from both the teacher and peers, is accurate, specific, and advances learning. Questions/prompts/assessments are used regularly to diagnose evidence of learning by individual students.	***Highly Effective* performance includes evidence that the teacher embeds assessment within the context of instructional routines, and uses this information to adjust instructional strategies (e.g., prompting, fading, reinforcement, error correction procedures, accommodations, modifications), <u>such as:</u>** • Multiple data collection methods (e.g., checklists, charts, assessment tools) are aligned to students' instructional goals and are used to collect data on a regular basis. • Data collected from all service providers are regularly used to inform instructional decisions. • Students are provided systematic feedback on their performance related to instructional tasks (e.g., teacher uses prompts to elicit student's correct response, teacher provides reinforcement as a consequence to a correct response, teacher strategically fades prompts and supports student's response to natural stimuli), with the feedback appropriate to the task, the students' level of learning, student's age, and the students' communication challenges.

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SECTION III: APPENDIX

Pre-Observation Conference Questions

In order to conduct an effective observation of a teacher of students with significant disabilities *and* be prepared to provide appropriate and actionable feedback, evaluators must have a general understanding of: 1) the needs of the students in the class, and 2) expectations regarding the practices of the teacher in meeting these needs. Students with significant disabilities in classrooms may vary widely in terms of ability levels; thus, instructional targets and strategies, assessments tools, and supports must be highly individualized. This population of students presents complex challenges and unique needs, and a well-planned pre-observation conference between the teacher and his/her evaluator can help to set the stage for a meaningful observation/feedback cycle.

These questions/considerations are presented as bulleted lists of *possible areas for discussion* between the teacher and his/her evaluator, organized according to the Domains of the Compass Teacher Rubric. Not all items may be relevant in each teacher's situation, as the priorities and needs identified in each student's IEP should help to drive the discussion between the teacher and his/her evaluator. (**NOTE: This is *not* a checklist of items that *must* be addressed. Use of this tool is optional.)**

Pre-Conference Observation Questions/Considerations

Component 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes	• What should I expect to see in the observation that is aligned to the students' IEPs? • What are your students' strengths, learning priorities, and support needs (e.g., communication, assistive technology, modified materials, behavioral supports, sensory issues) and how these are reflected in the IEPs, the lesson, and SLTs? • How do you determine "rigor" for individual students? • What are the learning/instructional objectives of your students as they relate to skill acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization? • How do you support increasing the active participation of students? • How do you incorporate the principal of *partial participation*? • How do you collaborate with instructional team members to establish learning goals (e.g., Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist, and Occupational Therapist)?
Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures	• How will you group students for instruction and use resources to effectively manage the groups (e.g., assignment of paraprofessionals to manage small groups)? • How will you incorporate available assistive technology (AT) and augmentative/alternate communication (AAC) supports? • What are your procedures for schedules and transitions (including plans for management of student self-directed time)? • How will you meet health care/physical support needs of students (when applicable)? • What environmental modifications/adaptations (e.g., specialized equipment, age-appropriate picture schedule, materials/equipment layout promotes student understanding/navigation of classroom instructional areas) will you incorporate? • Are there situations (e.g., student seizure, medication side effects) that may necessitate a change in a routine/procedure? • Are there any community-based/job site observation issues?
Component 3b: Questioning and	• How will you use prompting (e.g., verbal, gestural, visual) and fading procedures aligned to student instructional needs/data findings? • How will you enhance opportunities for student communication and engagement? • Will you provide visual supports to facilitate student participation (e.g., pictures provided to

Discussion Techniques	supplement student comprehension of topic of discussion)?
Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning	• How will you incorporate accommodations and supports/AT matched to unique student needs (e.g., sensory, health, cognitive processing, motor, communication) to maximize engagement in learning? • What types of accessible instructional materials modified to meet individual needs are used? • Are there students who require positive behavioral supports (e.g., behavior support plans, very specific types/schedules of reinforcement)? • Are there considerations related to the pacing of a lesson to accommodate students' learning/participation challenges? • How do you support students to work on a variety of skills in the context of a lesson? • What reinforcement strategies and error correction procedures are used?
Component 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction	• How do you collect and analyze data to inform instruction (e.g., as compiled in Literacy Folder, progress reports)? • How do you incorporate multiple means of assessment within instruction (e.g., Bridge, teacher made checklists/rubrics)? • How are instructional team members involved in the assessment process? • How do you monitor progress of students across instructional settings and groupings?

Key Terms Related to Education for Students with Significant Disabilities

A general understanding of the key concepts listed below may assist an evaluator in the process of observing in a class for students with significant disabilities. For further information, visit http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov

Curriculum: Students with significant disabilities (e.g., students who qualify for participation in LEAP Alternate Assessment, Level 1) should be provided instruction linked to the general education curriculum, Louisiana Extended Standards, and specialized objectives as determined by the IEP team. To the greatest extent possible, instruction should take place in general education environments alongside typical same-age peers.

Augmentative and alternate communication (AAC)
Augmentative and alternate communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. People with severe speech or language problems rely on AAC to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional. Special augmentative aids, such as picture and symbol communication boards and electronic devices, are available to help people express themselves. (http://www.asha.org, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

Assistive Technology: *Assistive technology* devices are any items, pieces of equipment, or product systems that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Students with significant disabilities should have access to technology that will assist them in developing and participating in meaningful academics, social relationships, and employment activities. Both low and high technology approaches can be combined to allow students to communicate with others and to exert varied levels of control over their environments.

Accessible Instructional Materials
Students with significant cognitive disabilities who have difficulty with reading or understanding text are likely candidates for the provision of accessible instructional materials (AIM). That is, these students may need to have their core and supplemental instructional materials provided to them in an alternate format (e.g., digital, audio, graphic/pictorial supplements) to support their access of the curriculum.

Active Participation: It is critical for teachers to increase opportunities for students with significant disabilities to take an active role in the lesson or activity at hand. Teachers should use a variety of techniques to increase meaningful student engagement (e.g., cognitive and/or physical contribution to the activity) in all aspects of the lesson. Care giving, an important quality of schooling, should not be misinterpreted as instruction; however, to the extent possible, students should be actively involved in caregiving routines.

Partial Participation: The *principle of partial participation* is an affirmation that students with significant disabilities can be taught to participate in activities with their peers across a wide variety of environments. This principle calls for the provision of individualized instruction, adaptations, and supports to facilitate a student's meaningful participation in activities, regardless of the level or complexity of the student's disability. While it may not be a realistic goal for a student to become totally independent in a task, it is still important to increase the level of sophistication by which they complete or engage in a task.

Age-appropriateness: *Age-appropriateness* means that the skills taught; activities, routines, and materials selected; and the language used must reflect the chronological age of the student. These practices ensure that a student's dignity is promoted and maintained, that responses from peers and society are positive, that student preferences are clear and respected, and that skill development and active participation in typical activities are enhanced.

Student Dignity: *Student dignity* refers to treating individuals with respect in accordance with their chronological age, individual differences, and preferences. Often, students with the most significant disabilities have difficulty expressing preferences and the instructional team must conduct systematic assessments in order to continuously identify, update, and build a menu of students' preferences. Preferences should be identified in the following areas: activities, settings, materials, and partnerships

Community Access*: Community access* refers to having the same opportunities to access community environments and services as do typical persons, regardless of disability level. Community environments include, but are not limited to, community colleges, libraries, recreational centers, banks, grocery stores, restaurants, theaters, museums, and shopping malls. While a limited amount of community-based instruction may be appropriate for younger students (e.g., middle school), this type of instruction is better suited to older students (high school).

Vocational Training/Employment: *Vocational training* provides opportunities for individuals to develop work skills and to sample jobs on the school campus and in the community to identify job preferences for employment. *Employment* refers to meaningful work that is dignified, integrated, and paid, and which may be supported or competitive in nature. Vocational training and employment are directly linked to transition programming.

Levels of Learning: Students with significant disabilities require instruction that is strategically planned and aligned to their unique learning needs and challenges. When designing instruction, consideration should be given to strategies which move students through the following stages of learning:

- Acquisition: refers to the very beginning stage of learning a new skill.
- Fluency: refers to the state of learning wherein a student can perform a skill, but cannot do so at the rate, frequency, or level of accuracy in which the skill should be performed.
- Maintenance: refers to the ability to perform a skill after regular instruction has been discontinued. For some students, it may be necessary to routinely check for maintenance of skills and to build in regular practice of acquired skills.
- **Generalization:** learned skills to other situations, demonstrating those skills with different people, different materials, different environments, and at different times. The objective of training generalization is that the student will be able to perform the skill in natural situations/settings outside the classroom. Many students

with significant disabilities have great difficulty with the generalization of skills. As such, systematic instruction should occur in a variety of settings and contexts, including classrooms, school campuses, and for older students, community and vocational sites.