

UDL & Inclusive Grading Practices for IEP Implementation

Purpose & Overview

Grades are meant to reflect student learning, but traditional grading often penalizes students with disabilities for factors unrelated to mastery (e.g., speed, neatness, missing work due to services).

By applying **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles** and inclusive grading practices, educators can ensure grades more accurately reflect what students *know and can do* while honoring IEP supports.

This worksheet provides **frameworks, examples, and ready-to-use grading adjustments** for inclusive classrooms.

Why Inclusive Grading Matters

- **Equity:** Prevents students with disabilities from being unfairly penalized.
 - **Clarity:** Grades reflect mastery of standards, not barriers to access.
 - **Consistency:** Aligns grading practices with IEP accommodations/modifications.
 - **Student Motivation:** Fair grading increases confidence and effort.
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UDL Principles Applied to Grading

UDL Principle	Grading Application	Example
Multiple Means of Representation	Provide flexible ways to access content before assessment.	Preview guides, vocabulary lists, scaffolded notes.

Multiple Means of Action & Expression	Allow students different ways to show learning.	Oral presentations, video submissions, typed essays.
Multiple Means of Engagement	Provide choice and relevance in assignments.	Student selects between a poster, essay, or slide deck.

Common Barriers in Traditional Grading

Barrier	Impact	Inclusive Alternative
Late penalties	Punish executive functioning challenges	Flexible deadlines, partial credit recovery, skill-based grading
Participation grades	Disadvantage anxious or nonverbal students	Grade based on learning products; offer alternative forms of engagement
Neatness/handwriting	Penalize fine motor difficulties	Accept typed or speech-to-text responses
Timed tests	Harm processing speed disabilities	Provide extended time, untimed assessments, or alternative measures
Extra credit	Favors students with more resources	Offer universally accessible enrichment options

Practical Grading Adjustments

Accommodations (Access Supports)

- Accept oral responses instead of written.
- Grade content, not spelling, for students with dyslexia (unless spelling is the targeted skill).
- Provide retake opportunities aligned with progress monitoring data.

Modifications (When Standards Are Altered)

- Assess mastery of individualized standards from the IEP.
- Use alternate rubrics aligned to functional skills.
- Clearly communicate modified grading expectations to families.

Inclusive Practices for All Students

- Use standards-based grading (separate academic mastery from behaviors/effort).
- Allow flexible formats for assignments.
- Provide rubrics upfront so expectations are transparent.
- Replace zeros with “incomplete” until opportunities for recovery are given.

Case Scenarios

Scenario 1: Writing Assignment

- Student with dysgraphia produces strong verbal answers but incomplete written essay.
- **Inclusive Grading:** Accept oral presentation or typed version with speech-to-text; grade on content mastery.

Scenario 2: Math Quiz

- Student with ADHD leaves several items blank due to time constraints.
- **Inclusive Grading:** Provide extended time and chunked sections; grade only completed items if they represent the standard assessed.

Scenario 3: Participation Grade

- Student with selective mutism receives a low grade for “class participation.”
 - **Inclusive Grading:** Accept nonverbal participation (turning in exit ticket, collaborating on written group tasks).
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Inclusive Grading Checklist for Educators

- Am I grading mastery of standards, not access barriers?
 - Have I honored the accommodations and modifications listed in the IEP?
 - Am I providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge?
 - Have I separated behavior/effort from academic mastery (when possible)?
 - Have I communicated grading practices clearly to students and families?
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Educator Script (*Explaining to Families*)

- “Your child’s grade reflects what they’ve mastered in relation to the standards, with accommodations in place to level the playing field. This way, the grade measures their learning, not their disability.”
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Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Pick one assignment you’re grading this week.
- Ask: “Does this grade reflect mastery of the content, or barriers to access?”
- Adjust by offering **one alternate demonstration option** (oral, visual, digital).

- Track student response and engagement.