

Understanding Mainstreaming and Support Facilitation

A Classroom Guide to Service Delivery and Inclusive Support

Purpose & Overview

This guide helps teachers understand how mainstreaming and support facilitation function as service delivery models for students with disabilities. It clarifies how instruction, collaboration, and accommodations are implemented within each model so teachers can provide effective, legally aligned support in daily classroom practice.

The goal is to strengthen instructional clarity, collaboration, and student access to grade-level learning while ensuring services reflect IEP expectations and the least restrictive environment.

Objectives

By using this guide, teachers will be able to distinguish between mainstreaming and support facilitation, understand their instructional responsibilities within each model, collaborate effectively with special education staff, and implement accommodations consistently. The guide also supports alignment with IEP service minutes, student access to the general curriculum, and inclusive instructional planning.

Key Concepts

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming occurs when a student with a disability participates in the general education classroom for specific subjects or time periods based on individual readiness and IEP decisions. Instruction is primarily led by the general education teacher, with accommodations and supports provided as outlined in the student's plan.

Support Facilitation

Support facilitation provides specialized support within the general education classroom through collaboration between general and special education teachers. The special education teacher may co-teach, consult, or provide targeted assistance to ensure the student can access instruction and use accommodation effectively.

Both models are designed to support learning in the least restrictive environment while maintaining access to grade-level expectations.

Comparison of Service Delivery Models

Feature	Mainstreaming	Support Facilitation
<i>Classroom Placement</i>	Student joins general education for specific subjects or periods	Student remains in general education with in-class support
<i>Instructional Responsibility</i>	Primarily general education teacher	Shared responsibility between general and special education teachers
<i>Type of Support</i>	Accommodations and occasional assistance	Ongoing instructional, behavioral, or organizational support
<i>Collaboration Level</i>	Periodic communication	Continuous planning and coordination
<i>Goal</i>	Access to selected learning environments	Full participation in grade-level curriculum

Roles and Responsibilities in Practice

Effective implementation depends on clear collaboration between educators.

General Education Teachers focus on delivering grade-level instruction, providing accommodations, monitoring progress, and maintaining communication with support staff.

Special Education Teachers or Facilitators support lesson access, model strategies, provide targeted intervention, assist with accommodation use, and collaborate on instructional planning.

Shared responsibility ensures students receive consistent, meaningful support rather than fragmented assistance.

Indicators of Effective Implementation

Teachers can look for the following signs that services are working as intended:

- Accommodations are used consistently during instruction and assessment
- Instructional roles between teachers are clear and coordinated
- Students actively participate in learning activities
- Communication between staff occurs regularly
- Student progress reflects access to grade-level content

These indicators suggest the service model is supporting true instructional access, not just physical placement.

Classroom Collaboration Strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>What It Looks Like in Practice</i>
<i>Shared Planning Time</i>	Teachers review lessons, accommodations, and goals together
<i>Defined Instructional Roles</i>	One teacher models while the other supports or monitors
<i>Consistent Accommodation Use</i>	Supports available across activities and assessments
<i>Data Sharing</i>	Supports available across activities and assessments
<i>Ongoing Communication</i>	Quick check-ins before or after lessons

Collaboration transforms service delivery from logistical placement into intentional instruction.

Teacher Reflection Check

Teachers may reflect on the effectiveness of services by considering:

- Are accommodations being provided consistently?
- Do both teachers understand their instructional roles?
- Is the student actively engaged in learning?

- Are progress and challenges communicated regularly?
- Does instruction support access to grade-level expectations?

Reflection helps maintain alignment between services, instruction, and student outcomes.

Student Experience and Self-Advocacy

Students benefit when they understand how support is provided and feel comfortable using accommodations. Teachers can encourage this by explaining supports clearly, reinforcing independence, and inviting students to reflect on what helps them succeed.

Student voice strengthens confidence, participation, and long-term self-advocacy skills.

IEP and Service Alignment

Understanding these service models supports:

- Accurate implementation of IEP service minutes
- Access to the general education curriculum
- Compliance with least restrictive environment requirements
- Clear documentation of instructional support
- Effective collaboration during IEP meetings and reviews

Service delivery should always reflect student need, not convenience.

Closing Reminder for Teachers

Mainstreaming and support facilitation are not simply placement decisions they are instructional commitments. When collaboration is intentional and accommodations are used consistently, students gain meaningful access to learning, stronger confidence, and improved academic outcomes.