# Identifying Essential Supports for Students and School Staff

Strategies that make a difference

Specialized

Targeted

Universal

"**Goal Two: Capacity** - The education system is equipped, resourced and ready to support and respond to the needs of all students in an inclusive way." (Setting the Direction, 2010)

Building inclusive learning environments requires a number of essential supports for both students and staff. While not every student will require the same supports, there are a few key elements that should be in place in order to effectively provide an inclusive learning environment for all students. This tip sheet describes a number of supports that are essential components of inclusive learning environments.

**Supports for Students:**

## Knowledgeable Teachers

- The most important area of support comes from a teaching staff that is knowledgeable and has positive relationships with students and parents.
- The knowledge required includes a deep understanding of the program of studies, effective teaching strategies, and an understanding of all students' strengths and needs.

## Student Profiles

- Teachers must have an understanding of the strengths and needs of each student in their classroom. Students must have an awareness of how they themselves learn best and have choices in how to best demonstrate their understanding of what they know.

## Technology

- For many students, access to technology can make a significant difference in how they access and interact with information related to learning outcomes and how they demonstrate their understanding.
- Tools and technologies may look different for each student depending on his or her strengths and needs. What is most important is that every student has access to the appropriate supports he or she needs to be successful.

## Independence and Self-Advocacy

- To be truly active learners, students must learn how to access resources and supports when they need them, and to advocate for themselves in the context of whatever learning environment they are in.

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**Support for Teachers:**

### Supportive School Leadership

- Most importantly for teachers, the school leaders must be at the forefront of driving the vision of inclusive learning throughout the school and be committed to ensuring teachers have the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms.

### Collaborative Teaming

- For many schools, the creation of teaching teams has been an essential component of their inclusive environment.

- Working collaboratively with other teaching colleagues can provide the support and extra help that is often required when working with a diverse group of learners.

### Access to Professional Learning Opportunities

- School staff need ongoing professional learning opportunities to build their capacity in supporting students with diverse learning needs, including opportunities to develop their capacity related to positive behavior supports and differentiated instruction

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