 

# **CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS CHECKLIST**

## Date:

## Team Members:

**Purpose:**

The Illinois State Board of Education has stated that “in successful districts and schools, there is a collective commitment to collaboratively identify, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and communicate changes necessary to continuously improve student learning for **all** students.”

Further, it is essential to ensure that students with IEP’s have opportunities to benefit from high-quality instruction, to reach the same standards as all students, and to leave school prepared to successfully transition to post-school learning, living, and working. *The Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs* was developed as a result of an extensive literature review to assist school leaders in facilitating conversations, reviewing, and improving the quality of special education programs, services, and supports as a key component of continuous improvement efforts as both the District/Cooperative/School level.

*The Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs (Critical Components Tool)* offers guidance to educators and administrators when developing, implementing, and evaluating quality programs and services for students with IEP’s. *The Critical Components Tool* identifies twelve domains to consider for effective programs. Under each domain is an indicator and below that are descriptors of the indicator that define quality school experiences with the goal of improving post-school outcomes for all students with IEP’s. *The Critical Components Tool* is designed to assist Districts/ Cooperatives/ Schools to review practice and to identify and act on areas where improvement is desired or needed and should not be interpreted as policy or regulation.

*The Critical Components Tool is meant to be used in conjunction with a continuous* District/ Cooperative/ School improvement process that reviews multiple measures including a variety of data and other assessment tools. It can be utilized in conjunction with the Illinois Quality Framework as a companion tool to look deeper into the area of special education and special education programming. The team may choose to complete the *Critical Components Tool* in its entirety, select specific domains on which to focus, or complete the screener. Action plans resulting from this analysis should be integrated with the District/ Cooperative/ School improvement plan.

In summary, the purpose of the Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs is to assist Districts/ Cooperatives/ Schools with the following goals:

* Identify a site’s current implementation level (baseline analysis)
* Identify areas that are effective and those in need of improvement
* Support the development of goals and action planning in critical areas of special education programming

**Instructions for Administration:**

Identify a team to complete *The Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs.* This team should include a variety of stakeholder representative of both general and special education (e.g. administrators, teachers, support personnel, parents, students, a school board member etc.). This team could be an existing District/Cooperative/School leadership team, or an ad hoc team developed for this specific purpose.

Prior to meeting as a team, each team member must review the *Critical Components Tool* and independently rate each item on their copy of the *Critical Components Tool*. It should then be submitted to the facilitator for aggregating the scores identifying areas of agreement and disagreement. Each team member should think about evidence which would support their rating. Should an item not be used within the District/Cooperative/School, the team member and team should insert N/A in the evidence column the *Critical Components Tool*.

After each member has reviewed the *Critical Components Tool* independently, schedule approximately one to two hours to meet as a team to discuss individual responses and reach agreement on the rating that best represents the current status of implementation at the identified site. A team member should be identified as the notetaker to record the ratings for each item, supporting evidence, and team discussion. A facilitator to support administration of the *Critical Components Tool* should also be identified.

Complete the *Critical Components Tool*. The facilitator will identify each item and ask team members to indicate their individual rating by a show of fingers. (Not implementing = 0, Emerging = 1, Implementing = 2, Exemplary = 3) If everyone is in agreement, the notetaker will record that rating. If team members have varying responses, discussion will be held until a consensus regarding the rating is reached. Discussion will be documented in the notes section. Record evidence supporting the ratings of “Implementing” and “Exemplary” only.

Use the completed *Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs* to analyze the results, identify areas of strength, and challenge. Prioritize areas of challenge and select items for further analysis and/or action planning. Develop goals to improve identified areas. Goals and action planning from your review should be integrated with the District/Cooperative/School improvement plan.

**Rubric for Evaluation:** The following definitions describe each rating utilized on the *Critical Components Tool for Special Education Programs:*

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| **Not Implementing (0)** | No evidence of implementation |
| **Emerging (1)** | Inconsistent evidence of implementation |
| **Implementing (2)** | Implementation is occurring but requires ongoing support, professional  learning, and/or further development |
| **Exemplary (3)** | Implementation is occurring consistently in all settings without support and  is a part of the District/Cooperative/School culture |

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| **I. LEADERSHIP** | | | | | |
| **Indicator and Descriptors** |  | | | | |
| **1.** The District/School establishes a culture of shared leadership,  teamwork, and collaboration focusing on continuous improvement. | **Not Implementing** | **Emerging** | **Implementing** | **Exemplary** | **Evidence** |
| a. Special education staff are represented on district and building leadership  teams. |  |  |  |  |  |
| b. A continuous improvement plan that aligns with the district/school goals is developed and implemented. |  |  |  |  |  |
| c. A professional learning plan that aligns with the continuous improvement plan is developed and meets the needs of the staff. |  |  |  |  |  |
| d. District/School leadership and all district/school staff develop and  communicate a common vision for specialized instruction in an ongoing and consistent manner. |  |  |  |  |  |
| e. Leadership proactively track and analyze special education data. |  |  |  |  |  |
| f. There are district and building specific goals inclusive of students with IEPs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| g. District/School leaders allocate human and financial resources to support scheduling and planning time to ensure all students receive rigorous and appropriate instruction throughout the continuum of special education programs and services. |  |  |  |  |  |
| h. Follow-up and support for implementation of new initiatives or programs and maintenance of established programs are evident. |  |  |  |  |  |
| i. District/School leaders promote an atmosphere conducive to increasing achievement of students with IEPs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| j. District/School leaders understand and support programs for struggling  learners. |  |  |  |  |  |
| k. A comprehensive coordinated program (literacy, math, behavior/SEL) for  students with IEPs exists and is implemented with fidelity. |  |  |  |  |  |
| l. District/School leaders ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessment  expectations are communicated to staff and students. |  |  |  |  |  |

TEAM DISCUSSION NOTES

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| **LEADERSHIP**  **The District/Cooperative/School establishes a culture of shared leadership, teamwork, and collaboration focusing on continuous improvement.** |
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