Federation's Disability Inclusion Planning Toolkit
Education Discussion Guide
Every Jewish student deserves a meaningful Jewish education.

This discussion guide is designed to spark conversation about inclusion in early childhood, religious school, adult and B'nai Mitzvah education. As with all disability inclusion work, the voices of those with disabilities are essential to this process.

Additional information about advancing disability inclusion can be found on Federation's Community Resource website. Please contact Lisa Handelman at 301-230-7278 or at lisa.handelman@shalomdc.org for questions or to share additional resources.

Toolkit Legend

W "Welcoming" questions and comments refer to changes that may involve modification in attitude, but do not necessarily require additional funding.

A "Accommodating" questions and comments focus on specific accommodations that may require minimal additional resources, long-term planning and/or significant funding. Some costs are ongoing while others involve initial structural changes followed by less expensive maintenance.

Awareness & Communication

W **Is the atmosphere and attitude of your educational programs welcoming to individuals with disabilities?** Do teachers and students respond positively to student diversity and specifically to including students and adult learners with disabilities? Are all learners respected and accepted by their peers such that all receive invitations to attend social events outside of formal education settings, including youth groups, Sisterhood, Men's club and *B'nai Mitzvah* celebrations?

W **Do you have an inclusion statement?** Think about incorporating an inclusion statement on registration materials for all educational programs that states that programs strive to include individuals with disabilities.

A **Do your curriculum and the materials you use communicate your desire to provide inclusive education?** Is there information on registration materials about learning needs and how to request accommodations? Does the curriculum include lessons specifically about respect and acceptance of disabilities? Do all school programs include regular check-in meetings with teachers, students and families? Are books that portray individuals with disabilities in positive ways available in your congregation/agency and/or classroom libraries?

Enrollment

W **Does your enrollment procedure encourage individuals with disabilities to get involved?** Is there a trusted procedure for parents or adult learners to share information about learning and other needs, including mental health issues? Is there a plan in place to provide educational, social and community connections for children and adult learners who are not enrolled in the formal education program (invitations to celebrations, guest performances, special programs and access to educational material and resources)?

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shalomdc.org/inclusionassessment

(W) Are the school's services and facilities equally accessible to students and adult learners with and without disabilities? Are all students, including those with physical needs, those who are deaf, bind and those that have developmental disabilities, autism or mental health conditions, welcome to enroll, and do all students have opportunities to be in classes with similarly-aged peers?

Budget

(W) Do you have a strategic budgetary plan? Does your budget plan include a clear timeline to support changes to your educational program with the long-term goal of fully including all learners?

(A) Is the cost associated with including students and adult learners with disabilities included within the budget without additional cost being passed onto families or participants? Is the cost for a learning specialist or other trained professionals included in your budget? Are the costs of learning and testing accommodations, behavioral supports, instructional aides (e.g. 1:1 shadows), computer technology, ASL interpreters and adaptive materials such as large print, audio, assisted listening devises and braille material included in your budget?

Staff Training and Planning

(W) How are you actively exploring ways to provide more inclusive educational opportunities? Are structures and procedures in place to facilitate parents/adult learners and educators working in partnership to meet the needs of all students including those with visible and hidden disabilities and those with mental health conditions? Are adults with disabilities involved in creating and teaching classes?

(A) Is the staff and curriculum positioned to involve individuals with disabilities in meaningful and relevant ways? Is instruction differentiated and/or does it follow the principles of universal design of learning? Is a learning specialist, or other trained specialists, integrated as part of the staff? Is the staff willing and trained to work with a variety of learners and with a variety of behaviors? Are there ongoing training and professional development opportunities for all instructors so that everyone is current and informed about different learning challenges and special needs inclusion? Is there an ongoing system to evaluate if all students, including those with disabilities, are getting what they need?

Accommodations

(W) Do all educational programs strive to support all students to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of congregational/agency education? Are accommodations or modifications made to the *B'nai Mitzvah* training, program participation, and/or services, if needed for students and adult learners? When planning new programs are the planners required to demonstrate how the proposed program supports meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities?

(A) What accommodations do you have in place to support learning? Is there a plan in place to provide learning and testing accommodations, behavioral supports, instructional aides (e.g. 1:1 shadows), computer technology to support individuals who are blind, partially sighted or deaf, and ASL interpreters? Are accommodations such as large print, audio, assisted listening devises and braille material provided as needed, for school and adult learning programs? Are there audio versions of books and materials available for all levels of classes?

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