



OVERVIEW FOR SCHOOLS

THE ABILITY CHALLENGE 2019-20 PILOT PROGRAM

We must close the achievement gap in special education. Nationwide, graduation rates for students with disabilities – about 13% of the school-aged population – hover at around 65%, well below the 83% overall high school graduation rate. In Washington, DC, the numbers are even more stark, with 17% of students identified as having disabilities, and only 8-9% of these students testing proficient, compared to 25-27% of their general education peers.

The Ability Challenge (ABC) works to narrow the achievement gap between special education students and their general education peers by giving schools the tools to design, implement, and evaluate their improvement efforts. ABC's pilot will involve a selective cohort of DC public schools working to improve **common co-planning time and systems for collaboration** in order to better meet the needs of diverse learners. In schools relying increasingly on inclusive models for delivering special education, the ability to modify curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet the individualized needs of each student is a real challenge, and diverse learners often present with even more heightened needs. By improving the way adults collaborate with each other, we will empower each provider to bring their unique expertise to the table to (1) better identify each student's learning profile and (2) design and implement a targeted, robust plan to maximize achievement.

Schools will put into practice and study small tests of change using rapid feedback cycles focused on a common aim: **Over a four month period, pilot schools will increase the quality of common co-planning time and systems for collaboration by 25% and increase the amount of time spent in these activities by 15%.**

Pilot schools will work to collectively identify concrete actions for implementation geared toward this aim, such as:

Aspirations	Behaviors	Conditions
Using a specific agenda, protocol or checklist to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and clear goals/objectives	Implementing daily huddles to check in on student progress	Rearranging the master schedule to ensure co-planning between team members

Member schools will meet and **analyze data on a regular basis** to measure progress toward the shared aim. A small amount of data will be collected to assess the collaboration quality and the amount of time spent collaborating regarding student needs. Teams will use this data to study the implementation of their changes and make adjustments as needed.

In order to accelerate learning, the pilot will use a **cohort model** to encourage collective action, peer-to-peer sharing, and a diversity of viewpoints. In addition to ABC, an experienced group of DC faculty members are being identified to operate as trainers and mentors. **Member schools** will take part as cohort members testing improvement strategies to strengthen staff collaboration across the school, particularly focusing on better serving students receiving special education services. Member schools will identify school improvement teams that will be responsible for meeting every other week, as well participating in additional cohort level meetings as necessary.

Final school selections will take place in Summer 2019 and improvement work will occur between September 2019 and January 2020. For more information about joining our cohort, email info@theabilitychallenge.org or complete the application on our website at www.theabilitychallenge.org/pilot-application.