

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Measuring Quality and Improving Practice



Government of Alberta ■

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Assessment process

Focus

Authentic student experience is determined by the mutual efforts of students, fellow students, faculty members, administrators, family members and allies, and Initiative staff. This reflection focuses on an Initiative's contribution to shaping the conditions under which students, fellow students, and faculty members can learn and belong together. The process assesses the performance of the Initiative from the perspective of critical friends. It does not attempt to appraise students, fellow students, or faculty –though their accounts of their experiences with one another form a very important measure of the Initiative's effectiveness.

This assessment takes a definite perspective. Its lenses are shaped by an understanding of inclusion and the practices that are most likely to lead to an authentic student experience which has been refined over more than 20 years of experience with post-secondary inclusion. So while the level of student, faculty, administrative, or family satisfaction with an Initiative is important to note, generating satisfaction is not necessarily the same as rigorously promoting inclusion. It is the level of rigorous and coherent promotion of inclusion that this assessment intends to bring into focus.

To study this perspective more fully, refer to these publications:

Hughson, E.A., Moodie, S. & Uditsky, B. (2006). *The story of inclusive post-secondary education in Alberta*. Edmonton: Alberta Association for Community Living.

Uditsky, B. & Hughson, E.A. (2008). *Inclusive post-secondary education for adults with developmental disabilities: A promising path to an inclusive life*. Edmonton: Alberta Association for Community Living.

Team Purpose

The reflection team wants to be a critical friend to the Initiative, safeguarding the integrity of its commitment to inclusion, indicating opportunities for improved quality, and noting potential threats to the Initiative's future. Team members want to listen respectfully and understand the Initiative in the context of its history and situation before forming conclusions about notable achievements, areas for improvement, and areas of concern. They want to be thoughtful in framing questions that will engage the Initiative with critical opportunities for learning. They want to be honest in acknowledging any differences in values, differences in understanding of inclusion, and differences in judgements of what will be most effective. They want Initiative staff to recognize them as allies for their success.

Terminology

students refers to students with developmental disabilities

fellow students refers to those who are registered for classes in typical ways

class refers to all of the learning activities encompassed by a particular course: lectures, discussions, lab work, homework, projects, field trips, internships or field placements, etc.

campus refers to all of the aspects of student life outside class

institution refers to the university, college, or technical institute that hosts the Initiative

initiative refers to an organized effort to support students with developmental disabilities to have an authentic student experience in a university, college, or technical institute

facilitator refers to Initiative staff

governance refers to the structure that provides direction to the Initiative and supervision to facilitators

Structure

This manual outlines the assessment process, identifies the commitments that assure the integrity of post-secondary inclusive education, defines the perspective on inclusive post-secondary education that will guide the team's inquiry and judgements, and identifies eight benchmarks for learning to continually improve ability to make good on the Initiative's commitments.

I. Preparation for the assessment

Key people in the Initiative work with the team liaison. They review the manual and think about how the team can get the best understanding of the Initiative possible in the time available.

They choose students whose experiences reflect the Initiatives current reality. If possible this includes students in different years of their program, students whose experience reflects post-secondary inclusive education at its best, and students whose experiences raise important questions for the Initiative. They invite these students to spend some time telling one or two team members about their experience. With the student's permission, they also invite at least one instructor, family member(s), and, if possible, fellow student(s) to offer team members their perspective on the student's experience.

They invite key allies among faculty, staff, administration, and family members to meet with the team to discuss the place of the Initiative in the institution, the most important issues they see facing the Initiative, and the Initiative's plans for the future.

They gather materials that will inform the team about individual students (e.g. term-end reports, portfolios and work saved for portfolios) and about the Initiative (e.g. policies the Initiative follows, samples of facilitator work, publicity or recruitment materials).

Facilitators spend some time thinking about the benchmarks and their related questions and consider how best to inform the team about what the Initiative has tried, what has worked, what has not worked, ideas for future action and lessons learned. For many questions, well presented examples will give the team the best understanding. They use the *Self-Assessment Forms* (Appendix A) to guide their thinking and organize information for the team.

They schedule interviews and locate places for the team and its sub-groups to meet.

II. The team gathers information

Following the principle of seeking to understand before seeking to be understood, team members learn as much as possible from interviews and reviewing materials and documents.

III. The team constructs its assessment of the Initiative

The team considers the questions related to each benchmark, noting evidence of achievement, opportunities for improved quality, and areas of concern.

The team then identifies what its members think are the most important determinants of the Initiative's capacity to offer the conditions for an authentic student experience.

IV. The team reports to the Initiative and agrees on an Agenda for Improvement with the Initiative

Representative members of the team present the team's understanding of the Initiative's current performance and negotiates a written *Agenda for Improvement* that provides for timely address to any areas of concern and outlines a development plan for building on areas of strength and opportunities for improved quality.

Commitments of inclusive post-secondary education Initiatives

By supporting colleges, universities, and technical institutes to include and educate students with developmental disabilities, we intend to generate a new understanding of developmental disability that opens fresh possibilities for life-long belonging, learning, and contribution.

We demonstrate confidence in the positive possibilities of life-long inclusion through our actions.

We actively and persistently support an authentic student experience through our work with individual students and by influencing class and campus life.

We minimize difference by creatively promoting valued experiences and resisting the forces that pull students away from ordinary student experience and toward human service clienthood.

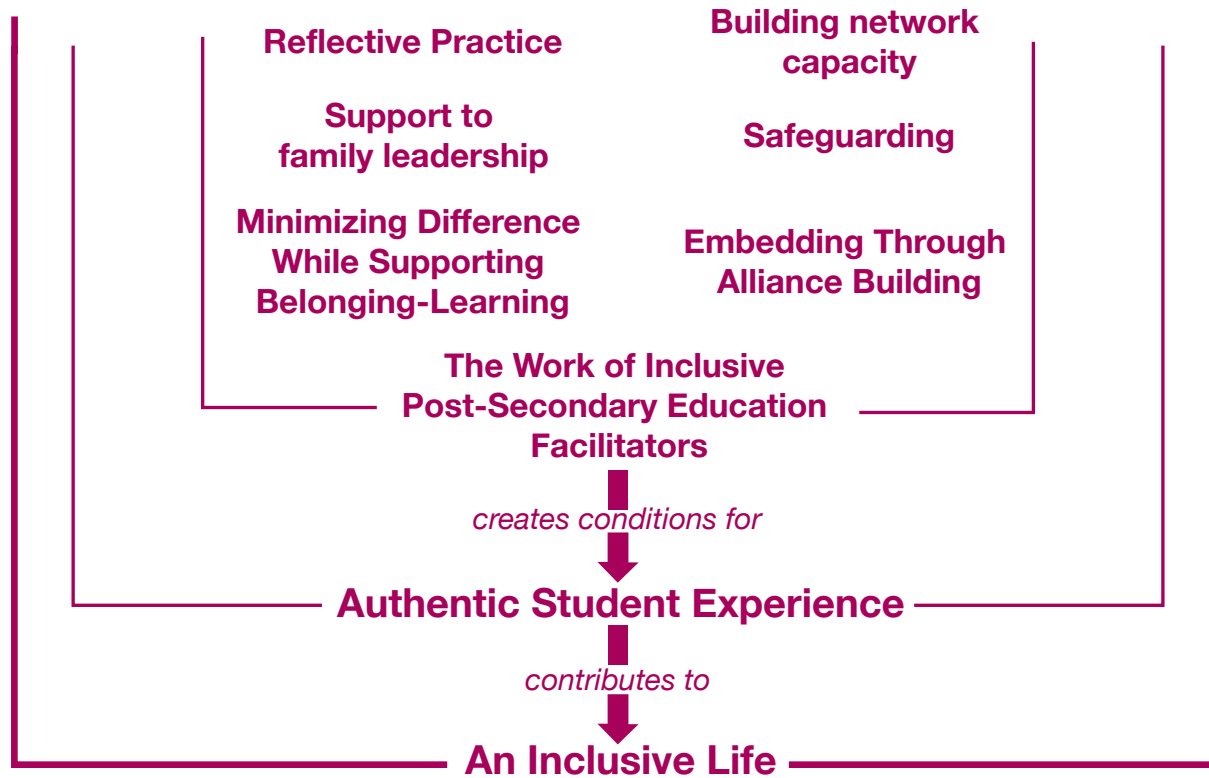
We embed the student's experience in the relationships, activities, routines, and rhythms of the campus by building alliances that encourage fellow students, faculty, and administrators to include students and support the Initiative.

We build strong and respectful relationships with students' families that encourage commitment to life-long inclusion.

We practice reflectively so that we can build our knowledge and continually improve our ability to honor our commitments.

We safeguard the integrity of our work by inviting regular evaluation of our practice.

We actively promote the development of inclusive post-secondary education through our participation in the network convened by AACL.



We demonstrate confidence in the positive possibilities of life-long inclusion

An **inclusive life** offers people with developmental disabilities the best chances to experience good things: the resilience, resources, pleasures, and challenges that come with **belonging**; **learning** that develops one's capacities; an **identity** that includes a sense that one can set and achieve meaningful goals through hard work and the support of others; and opportunities for meaningful **contribution**. As ordinary as it may seem, an inclusive life is by no means assured for a person with a developmental disability who simply follows the path currently laid down in most communities. The typical life-path leads into a parallel world of specialized settings shaped by professional-bureaucratic images of therapy and protection. Despite recent efforts to reform this specialized world from within, the scope for belonging almost always remains limited to those congregated at the social margins; learning is typically restricted by either a focus on remedying skill deficiencies or avoidance of intentional instruction; identity is too often undermined by either paternalistic control or, as a reaction to paternalism, a refusal to offer robust support and guidance; and contribution is usually constrained to the opportunities originated by specialized settings.

People with developmental disabilities who lead inclusive lives most often do so because their deep desires to belong, to learn, and to contribute have been acknowledged and actively encouraged by those they love, admire, and rely on: their parents and family members in the first place, joined by their friends and allies as they grow up. Clear recognition of the truth that a person has capacities that will not flourish if he or she follows the path laid down by a locality's available sequence of specialized settings engenders commitment to risk stepping out of the parallel world of disability services and creating new pathways in ordinary settings that are valued and used with benefit by ordinary citizens. Inclusive post-secondary education is one such new pathway. Generated from the commitment of parents and their allies, its intention is to

The meaning: to disturb typical understandings of developmental disability in ways that open new possibilities for belonging, learning, and contributing.

offer people with developmental disabilities an **authentic student experience** in universities, colleges, and technical institutes. Though established and largely successful on some campuses for up to 20 years, it has substantial unrealized potential in these places, it requires careful development on each new campus, and it must continually adapt to changes that could degrade its effectiveness and pull it into the parallel world of specialized services. This means that those who choose the work of supporting people with developmental disabilities to open and expand this pathway need to actively cultivate these qualities:

- **Clarity** about the realities of life for people with developmental disabilities, about what contributes to their flourishing, and about the distinctive contribution that inclusive post-secondary education makes.
- **Commitment** to the hard work of developing support for an authentic student experience.
- **Willingness to learn** how to do the work better and how to safeguard its potential to benefit people.

Confidence if the positive possibilities of inclusion motivates Initiatives to stretch themselves by actively recruiting students with significant or complex needs for assistance. An Initiative that is homogeneous in its students or timid or passive in its selection process unnecessarily limits the impact of inclusion.

Realizing inclusion is hard work. On top of the typical problems of student life –managing time and assignments, figuring out when and how to get help with classwork, balancing social and academic life, dealing with the pressures and emotions of campus life– students have to overcome the pull of widely though mostly unconsciously held assumptions about the competencies and appropriate social position of people with developmental disabilities. These beliefs, which are reinforced by common practice in most human service settings, include these...



- ... students, because they are cognitively impaired, cannot learn, especially not the material covered in post-secondary courses.
- ... students will drain time and energy that instructors and other staff should be investing in properly registered students.
- ... students will degrade the value of others' certificates or diplomas if they are seen as accepted participants in an academic program (post-secondary inclusion is simply an excess of political correctness).
- ... if an exceptionally talented student could learn some post-secondary material, it would only be because a specialized professional adapted the material or guided the process; typical instructors lack capacity to teach the student because they have not been trained in special education or because motivation to accept the student would collapse if the student made any demand on the instructor.
- ... students have no interests in common with others who attend post-secondary institutions, especially not in academic subjects.
- ... some programs –such as hospitality or perhaps disability studies– might have some meaningful offerings for students, but other subjects are beyond their reach.
- ... students have nothing meaningful to contribute to campus life; at best they might be adopted by some charitable informal or formal groups as a sort of a mascot.
- ... friendships and social contacts with typical students are somehow unnatural and at any rate unlikely and must be mediated by special services, like Best Buddies.

... graduates have very limited employment prospects outside sheltered settings; at best, the most capable of them will hold entry level jobs in a narrow range of workplaces.

These assumptions shape a mindset that makes difference-making practices seem reasonable. In this mindset, which some students and families may share, inclusion can seem unrealistic, precarious or dangerous and the lack of common service routines can seem risky or foolish. It can be imagined as generating a sort of self-reinforcing magnetic field that distorts the authentic student experience by pulling students into activities which reinforce low expectations of students, their fellow students, and their instructors.



Meaning in the work of inclusive post-secondary education lies in creating situations in which students, fellow students, and instructors surprise themselves by discovering new capacities in themselves and others. These capacities disturb typical understandings of disability in ways that open new possibilities for belonging, learning, and contributing.

We support an authentic student experience

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

The purpose of inclusive post-secondary education is to offer people with developmental disabilities an authentic student experience in a university, college, or technical institute. **The standard** for deciding on authenticity is the experience of those ordinary students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their post-secondary education.

Authentic student experience unfolds from the admissions process to convocation in at least five contexts that weave together to promote belonging, learning, identity, and contribution:

- **Academic**: students pursue a coherent program of courses and related activities that develop their capacities and often reveal new interests and new priorities.
- **Social**: students make friends, connect with social networks, and pursue a social life in company with fellow students.
- **Associational**: students join and participate in organizations that reflect their interests and concerns.
- **Employment**: students explore their options for work through internships, career guidance, and part-time and summer jobs.
- **Family**: students assume a new place in their families as their competence, confidence, and autonomy grow and new possibilities emerge.

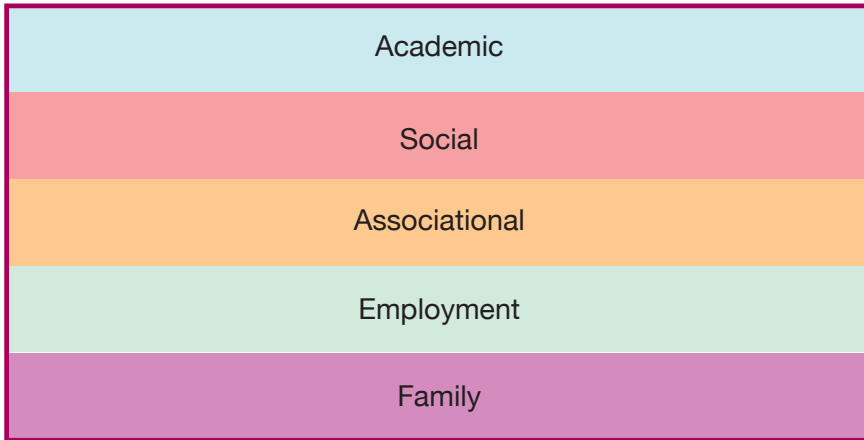
The multiple contexts of authentic student experience allow access to many **roles**, each of which carries different expectations, demands for competence, and status. Students' careers can be charted and differentiated by tracking the roles each person takes up and puts down through the years of their campus career.

The authentic student experience offers the opportunity to express membership in the distinctive **culture** of a particular field of study: those pursuing agriculture or hospitality studies typically distinguish themselves from students of music or education in dress, activities of interest, and language.

The authentic student experience shapes the **rhythms and routines** of...
... the day and week, with patterns of class time, study, recreation, socializing, and activities
... the month and term, with work on longer term academic projects, plays, art shows, concerts, sport seasons, etc.
... the year, with ordinary time, intense study periods, holidays, summer employment

The authentic student experience takes students into different academic, social and physical **spaces** on the campus.

Authentic Student Experience



Builds

- Friends, memberships & contacts
- Greater knowledge of interests & capacities; a clearer answer to “Who am I?”
- Greater confidence that “I can reach ambitious goals if I work hard & ask for the help I need.”
- Skills & knowledge
- Higher expectations
- A record of achievement

* Student is taking a smattering of courses, perhaps based on ease of availability & expressions of immediate interest.

From the point of admission, student clearly identifies as a member of a particular faculty & program of study

Student’s jobs are random, selected for convenience.

Student’s jobs reflect & reinforce their program of study

Student’s social relationships are few & mostly confined to people directly involved in the Initiative & family.

Student’s social relationships include acquaintances and friends from their program of study & their memberships in campus associations.

Student is not involved in any campus association.

Student is an active member of campus associations & participates in a way that brings him or her into personal contact & collaboration with other members.

*Throughout this section, polarities illustrate some of the differences between not realizing a commitment and realizing it more fully.

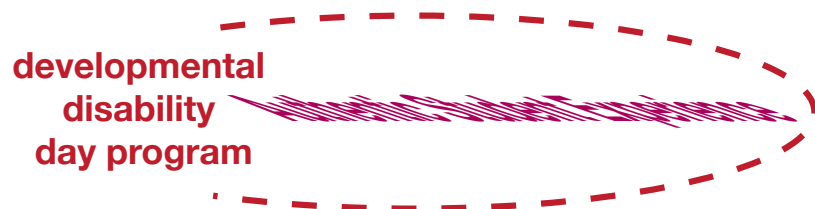
We minimize difference

The task: to discover the least difference-making approach to whatever limits student participation.

The success of many students shows that an authentic student experience, which substantially benefits the student and contributes to the quality of their fellow students' and instructors' experience, can be expected if there are **conscious, systematic (even relentless), creative, collaborative efforts to minimize the differences** that can pull students toward what is typical for most people with developmental disabilities.

Three differences are inherent in the Initiative's design:

1. Students are not matriculated. Their formal status is that of an auditor, present with the instructor's permission when room is available in the class. They do not earn the same certificate or diploma as their classmates.
2. Students are simultaneously PDD clients, participating in a funded developmental disability program or using developmental disability funds to (partially) meet the costs of the Initiative. This imports some human service expectations into the Initiative and invites family members and educational administrators to perceive it as a developmental disabilities day program.
3. Students are likely to require some adaptations, assistance, or support because of their impairments and, perhaps, their history.



Inherent differences can be managed: auditors participate in class work, some campuses are seeking a student status that more accurately reflects their role; there is a growing variety of ways that student achievements are recognized and that students participate in Convocation; many campuses own the Initiative, some to the extent of employing the facilitator as a staff member. Assistance and adaptations can be provided in ways that respect the dignity of the student's status and are harmonious with the ways that fellow students accomplish similar tasks, sometimes to the point that adaptations are almost invisible.

Other differences arise...

- ... as compromises are made to permit a student access to a particular class or activity.
 - ... to accommodate family concerns for the student's safety or comfort.
 - ... to accommodate student concerns that arise from the student underestimating his or her capacity to learn or the capacity of fellow students and instructors to provide necessary help.
 - ... to deal with some students' requirements for personal assistance
 - ... as a result of accepting suggestions from well-meaning people who have low expectations of the capacities of students, fellow students, or instructors.
 - ... as unintended results of good tries to learn better ways to facilitate deeper participation.
 - ... when temporary compromises become unquestioned habits.
- At the individual level, the task is to discover and refine the least difference-making approaches to whatever limits the student's participa-



tion. At the level of the institution, the task is to make the least possible adaptation that students can manage, with assistance when it is necessary. Applying these criteria for solutions calls for discernment:

- How would this happen for the students here who gain the most benefit from their post-secondary experience?
- How close can we come to what is typical for fellow students while meeting this particular student's real need for support?
- How can the support the student needs be harmonious with the setting in which he or she needs it?

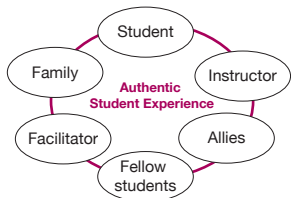
Student Relationship to Typical Pathway	Same As Fellow Students	Harmonious Adaptations	Noticeable Difference
Admission forms & process			
Orientation			
Student records			
Student identification			
Program of study			
Class selection & registration			
Financial transactions: Paying course, activity fees			
Verification of student achievement			
Convocation			

Student Relationship to Typical Class Practices	Same As Fellow Students	Harmonious Adaptations	Noticeable Difference
Seating & in-class participation			
Discussion sections & tutorials			
Lab work			
Homework			
Individual projects & major assignments			
Quizzes & exams			
Texts, materials, tools			
Group projects			
Study groups			
Field placements			
Internships			

We embed the student's experience in the relationships, activities, routines, and rhythms of the campus by building alliances

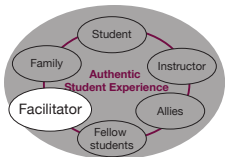
Facilitators use their assets –relationships, commitment, focus, confidence in others' capacities, creativity– to weave individual students and the Initiative into the classroom and campus.

By design, the scale of inclusive post-secondary Initiatives is very small relative to the size of the colleges, technical institutes, and universities that host them. Small numbers pose the host institution a real but limited demand for flexibility. They also make very high levels of individualization possible, especially when facilitators build alliances that embed the student in the class and faculty, among fellow students in student life and with employers and co-workers. In a successful Initiative the number of allies will grow: instructors and staff will be willing to persuade and assist their colleagues to welcome students and act as ambassadors to their departments, faculties, and the institution as



a whole; students will develop a wider network of support among their fellow students; experienced family members will be able to challenge and support both newer families and the Initiative as a whole.

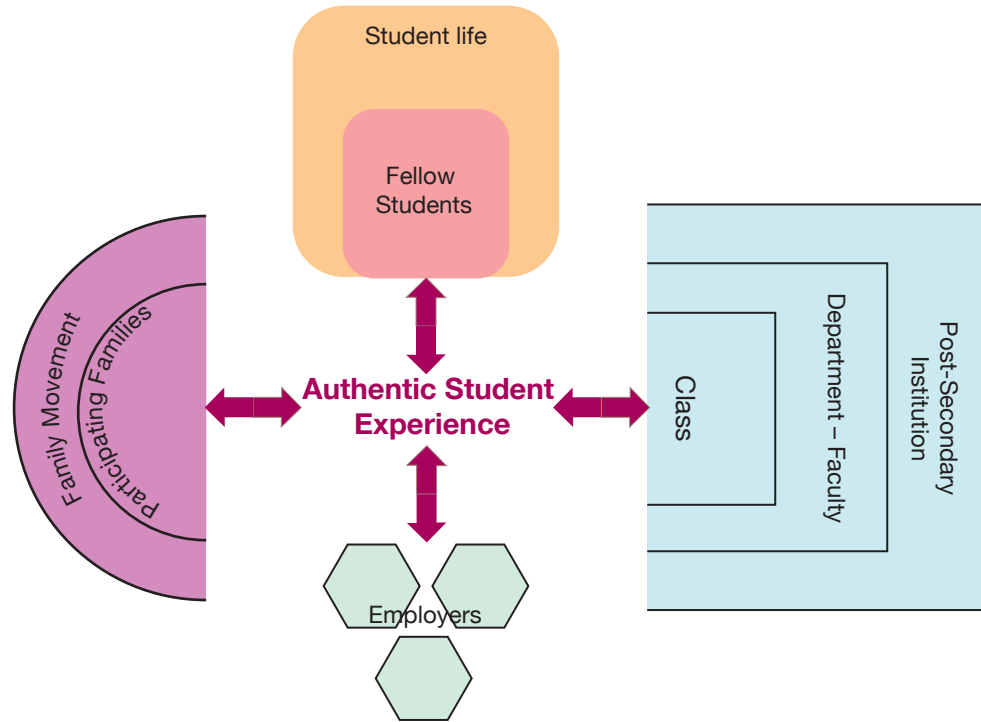
Possibilities shrink when students' success comes to depend primarily on the Initiative and particularly the assistance they and their assistants get from the facilitator. This generates a negative spiral: instructor and student increase demand on the facilitator, the facilitator assumes more and more responsibility and has less and less time and energy for alliance building, so the Initiative has fewer allies and is more vulnerable to the pull of difference-making.



Effective facilitators do not see themselves as isolated helpers offering special attention. They support students to do their share of the work of inclusion. They act purposely to engage students, fellow students, and instructors in problem solving, but only when their intervention is necessary. They recruit and develop allies and encourage allies to actively assist in improving the Initiative and weaving it into the fabric of the host institution.

Facilitators are themselves in somewhat marginal roles. They cannot command authentic student experiences, They cannot demand authentic student experiences as of right –inclusion is the right thing to do, but students have no enforceable right to participate in classes if they do not meet matriculation requirements. They use their assets –their relationships with students and with family and faculty allies, their commitment to realize inclusion, their ability to focus their time, their confidence in others' capacities, their creativity– to embed individual students and the Initiative in the life of the institution.

Effective facilitators work at multiple levels. They support instructors, fellow students, and employers to include individual students so that they learn, belong, and contribute in class, in student life, and at work. And they purposely influence the beliefs and practices that shape student life, programs of study, and the institution as a whole.



Facilitator “does it all”; has minimal expectations that instructor or fellow students will invest in student success.

Facilitator has effectively engaged instructor and fellow students in actively supporting student success.

Marginal; insiders see it as a special program, an outpost of the human services or a charitable enterprise located on campus.

Deeply embedded in the life & structure of the institution: seen by many insiders as “belonging to us”.

Facilitator sees self as disability specialist with responsibility for assuring appropriate student behavior & providing solutions to instructional problems.

Facilitator sees self primarily as developing & supporting alliances: student-fellow students; student-instructor; experienced instructor-new instructor, etc. Assists in identifying & realizing opportunities for greater inclusion and naming & solving problems that threaten inclusion without taking over.

No strong faculty, administration & staff allies engaged in guiding & promoting the Initiative.

Strong & well organized faculty, administration & staff allies who guide & promote the Initiative.

Employers identify Initiative as a disability service providing them with workers that the Initiative is primarily responsible to support.

Employers see students in the same way that they regard fellow students who work during holidays; employers share responsibility for worker’s success.

We build relationships with students' families that encourage their commitment to life-long inclusion.

Encouraging family leadership is the way to life-long inclusion.

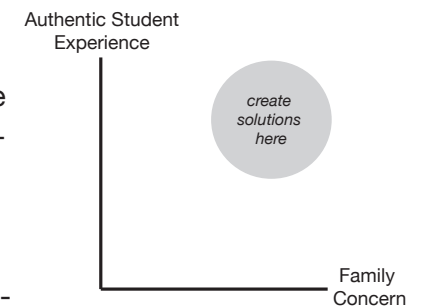
Strong and continuing family leadership is the most reliable way to assure life-long inclusion. This leadership is multi-dimensional and includes...

- ... communicating belief that the student can belong, learn, and contribute in a way that encourages the student to set and work hard to achieve ambitious personal goals (sometimes this communication includes stepping back to give the student room to try on his or her own and seek assistance from others)
- ... growing in knowledge of the student's gifts and capacities
- ... increasing knowledge of what best assists the student
- ... learning more about how to gain the benefits and meet the challenges of life-long inclusion
- ... investing in developing and guiding inclusive pathways like inclusive post secondary education
- ... building alliances that support the student's movement along an inclusive life path
- ... advocating for inclusion
- ... joining with other families to strengthen the movement for inclusion

Inclusive post-secondary education was created and is sustained through family leadership. However, some families who have not had opportunities to develop all of the dimensions of their leadership may support their son or daughter's application because the Initiative seems like the best offering among available day programs. They may see presence on campus under the active supervision of Initiative staff as meeting their highest expectations. Because an authentic student ex-

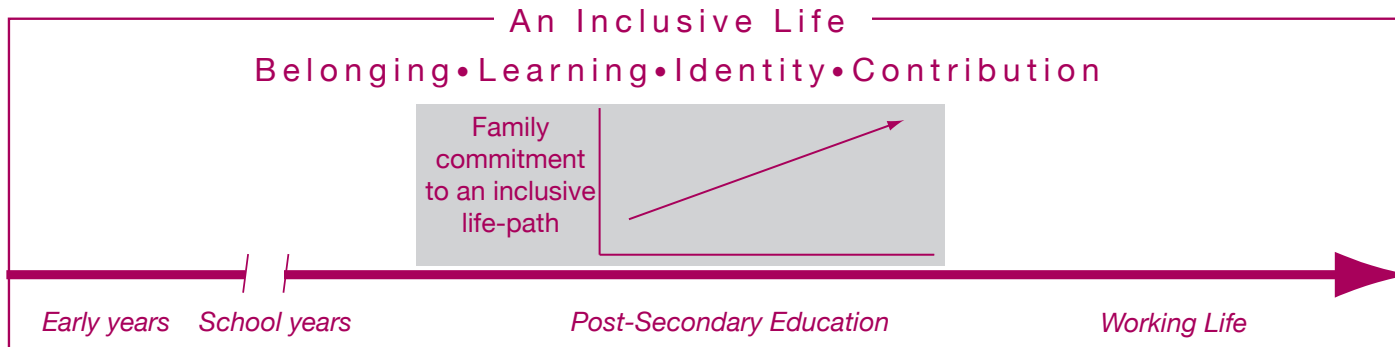
perience is time limited, seeing the Initiative as if it were a day program decreases the chances that the student will graduate into an inclusive career path.

Initiative staff have a double responsibility in their relationship with families. They listen with deep respect to family concerns and ideas *and* they promote an authentic student experience. When this leads to conflict they engage in creative problem solving with the family, seeking a solution that both engages the family's concern and promotes an even more authentic student experience. One important resource in finding good solutions is ongoing support that encourages families to keep updating their sense of the student's identity and capacities in light of his or her experiences of inclusion.



As important as respectful listening and creative problem solving by Initiative staff is, it is active engagement with other families that most reliably and strongly develops family leadership. The Initiative contributes to this by...

- ... encouraging connections to the family movement, especially participation in Family Leadership education
- ... engaging experienced family members in recruiting efforts, and in orienting and advising families who are going through the application process and their first year
- ... involving family members in guiding the Initiative.



Family primarily seeking a day program. For family, inclusion is secondary to activity & supervision.

Family strongly committed to inclusion. Shares willingly in dealing with risks, costs, & difficulties.

No effective ties between Initiative & family movement

Strongly linked to family movement through graduate & participant families who are active in guiding & promoting the Initiative

Family has little or no connection to family movement for inclusion.

Family has strong ties to other families and family organizations committed to inclusion.

Family is not engaged in guiding or promoting the Initiative.

Family invests in guiding, developing, & promoting the Initiative. E.g. reaches out to orient & encourage potential or beginning families; consults to support facilitator to deal with difficult situations; involved in Initiative planning; advocates for Initiative

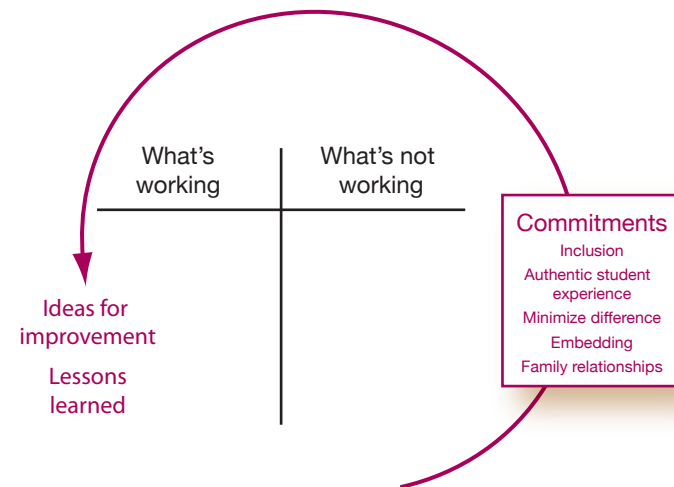
We practice reflection

The commitments and methods that support authentic student experience can be clearly stated. Making them real in practice calls for mindful and creative action. This is true in supporting individual students: diverse and developing people from unique families encounter different instructors in a variety of programs, meet their fellow students in various activities, events and associations, and work in a range of jobs. Each person needs support that links him or her productively with their setting, strengthens alliances, and leaves room for autonomy while responding to changing needs and possibilities. It is also true in establishing the Initiative on campus: learning the patterns of campus, program, and classroom life; building alliances that embed the Initiative in the post-secondary institution; and catalyzing the invention of ways that students can have an even more extensive and authentic student experience.

Facilitation can be emotionally demanding. A student's desire for new experience may encounter parental disapproval and that disapproval may lead a facilitator to react by siding with one against the other. A faculty critic may attack the Initiative, A student may get in difficulty that doesn't seem to have an easy resolution. An important decision may involve reconciling conflicting values. Colleagues may invoke defensiveness by offering criticism. Reflection, especially when it includes conversation with a trusted advisor, can help the facilitator move from reaction to a compassionate search for a better way.

To increase mindfulness and creativity, facilitators build their capacity for reflective practice, thoughtfully testing possible actions against the facilitator commitments, choosing actions that move toward the commitments, checking results, and stating lessons learned. They invest their attention in learning at three moments, through...

- ... **reflection-in-action** –the facilitator is thinking while doing as a particular situation unfolds.
- ... **reflection-after-action** –the facilitator takes time after an important moment and engages in conversation to identify what worked and what did not, generate ideas for next steps, and articulate lessons learned.
- ... **reflection-on-patterns-over-time** –the facilitator takes time out and steps back to consider the way that the whole Initiative is developing.



Reflection-in-action (up close in real time)

Commitment	How can our response to this situation...
Demonstrate confidence in inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... go beyond our current assumptions about what is possible to seek richness and challenge for students ... deepen commitment to life-long inclusion ... raise awareness of threats to inclusion
Support authentic student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... support students as engaged and responsible participants in the ordinary routines of classroom and campus ... strengthen and safeguard the students' sense of belonging within and outside the classroom ... build student confidence in their capacity and support to deal with difficult problems & seek ambitious goals ... promote student learning, both formal and informal ... deepen our understanding of student vulnerabilities in ways that make us more effective in providing support
Embed student experience in typical relationships, activities, routines & rhythms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... increase the investment of fellow students, faculty, and administration in individual student success & in the Initiative ... strengthen both student and Initiative alliances with faculty, administration, and fellow students ... increase knowledge of the culture, politics, social networks and workings of the class, the program of study and the campus
Build strong & respectful alliances with families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... increase the positive effects of family investment in inclusive post-secondary education ... strengthen our relationship with the student's families in a way that encourages high expectations and commitment to the work of continuing on an inclusive life pathway
Minimize difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... compromise an authentic student experience as little as possible and be clear on any compromises that appear necessary ... offer any necessary adaptations or assistance in ways that respect student dignity & harmonize with typical class & campus ways of doing things

Reflection-after-action (up close in review)

What we intended

What happened

What moved us closer to our commitments

What moved us away from our commitments

Ideas for next steps

What we learned

We safeguard the integrity of our work

Inclusive post-secondary education, like other intentional efforts to overcome the power of exclusion, needs its practitioners to consciously and systematically invest in safeguards. There are several points of vulnerability and related safeguards, including these:

- There is confusion in society about what inclusion means. Many human services pledge allegiance to inclusion while congregating the people they serve. Some say inclusion is whatever a person with a developmental disability says it is, representing whatever degree of participation a person chooses with whomever a person chooses. On this (mis)understanding a person who stayed at the margins of class and campus life, associating only with the facilitator, might be said to be included as long as he or she said this suited him or her. As a safeguard, facilitators and Initiative allies, especially allies among families and faculty, can continually deepen their understanding of inclusion by study and by attending relevant training.
- It takes discernment to determine when to offer a student guidance aimed at supporting him or her in an authentic student experience or keeping him or her from slipping into a devalued position. It also takes skill to offer effective guidance or a positive confrontation. As a safeguard, facilitators and allies can seek coaching from those with more experience, build their skill in describing difficult situations and their likely consequences, and seeking other's insight and advice.
- Facilitators work alone or in pairs and they are sometimes the most knowledgeable people about inclusion on the local scene (especially in early days before strong allies have emerged on campus and among families). There is a risk that practices that limit possibilities for inclusion will become normative on a particular campus. As a safeguard, facilitators invite regular evaluation of the Initiative and strive to be open in considering the reflection team's perceptions and suggestions.
- Facilitators have no formal power over instructors and may see themselves as of lower status than many of the people they want to influence. It is understandable that they might react to this situation by taking up the role of disability expert, position themselves as the wizard of curriculum adaptation, or assume responsibility for explaining and intervening in problems by describing possible causes and remedies for "behaviors" related to disability rather than looking first to instructors and other staff to discover their ways of understanding and dealing with difficulties and then joining in whatever problem solving might be necessary. Facilitators and allies can make these issues matter for reflection with critical friends and mentors.
- Facilitators must deal constructively with expectations that could draw them away from supporting students, instructors, and fellow students from doing their share of the work of inclusion. Many people want quick fixes, guaranteed results at no cost, and simple solutions. As a safeguard, facilitators can undertake a program of personal development that will build the grounding and skills necessary to

facilitate the work of inclusion rather than taking it on themselves or diverting their energies to activities of low relevance to inclusion.

- Active involvement of campus allies and family members in guiding the Initiative is an important source of strength. And, if those who offer guidance or provide governance are not strongly aligned with the facilitator’s commitments, they can distract or steer the Initiative away from its mission. As a safeguard, family members involved in guiding the Initiative can maintain strong links to the family movement for inclusion so that they can contribute to deepening the understanding of inclusive post-secondary education and get support for their own post graduation efforts to assure an inclusive future. And faculty and administration members of guiding groups can study and contribute to the shared understanding that defines good practice.
- The Initiative uses and is accountable for developmental disability services money and is subject to certain of the human service system’s rules. This could pull the Initiative away from its identity. As a safeguard, the Initiative meets requirements competently, maintains strong connections to advocates for post-secondary inclusive education, joins other Initiatives in seeking changes when system requirements threaten effectiveness, and works to diversify its funding.

Vulnerability	Potential Safeguard
Inclusion defined in ways that minimize challenge	Facilitators, families & allies study inclusion rigorously
Everyday decisions call for discernment	Facilitators have coaches & active support for reflection
Limiting practices become habits	Regular external review by others committed to inclusive post-secondary education
Expectations draw facilitators into behaving like developmental disability service workers	Intensive orientation by knowledgeable mentor. Regular reflection on daily routines with critical friends
Expectations draw facilitators into doing rather than facilitating the work of instructors or fellow students	Investment in regular reflection with critical friends. Investment in personal development of skills & attitudes of facilitation.
Governors or advisors misdirect Initiative because they are not aligned themselves with the commitments of post-secondary inclusion.	Strong links to family movement for family allies Faculty & administration have intensive opportunities for learning
Human service related funding can pull the Initiative away from its identification with post-secondary education.	Meet requirements competently Seek changes in requirements that have negative effects Diversify funding

We promote the development of inclusive post-secondary education

Knowledge of the meaning and benefits of authentic student experiences, and invention of practical ways to support those experiences, grows when involved people form a community of practice through which they choose to share the problems they encounter and the solutions they create, explore what it means to live up to the commitments that define inclusive post-secondary education, and develop more and better ways to communicate their experience.

It is important that this community of practice develop ground rules and norms that focus significant amounts of their time on critical reflection rather than becoming entirely consumed with shared sympathy for common complaints, figuring out practical ways to address resource difficulties, or working on responses to external demands.

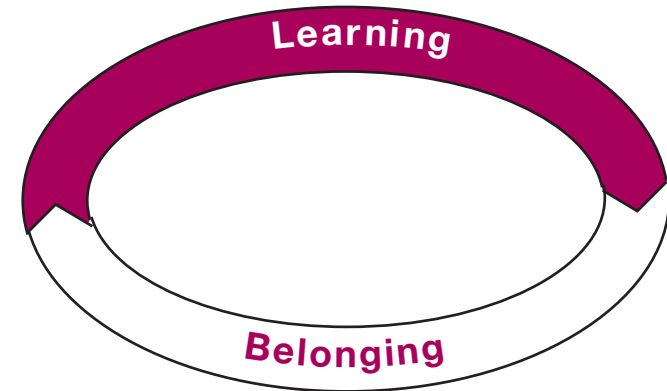
Members of the community of practice meet face to face from time to time. They also call on one another by e-mail or telephone or visits for coaching, joint problem solving, advice, and reflection time.

Benchmarks

An Initiative makes good on its commitments by continually improving its ability to support authentic student experiences. Eight benchmarks define the capacities that increase the chances that students will have authentic experiences and realize the benefits of inclusion.

1. Students are fully engaged in class learning experiences
2. Students belong to their classes
3. Students pursue a coherent course of study
4. Students benefit from and contribute to campus life
5. Students pursue an inclusive life-path after graduation
6. Families provide leadership for inclusive post-secondary education and life-long inclusion
7. The Initiative is embedded
8. The Initiative is safeguarded

Post-secondary inclusive education joins actions that promote learning with actions that promote belonging in ways that each reinforces the other. Students engaged in learning have a wider basis for belonging. Students who belong have a deeper foundation for learning.



1. Students are fully engaged in class learning experiences

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their ability to assure students the same learning experience in class as their fellow students.

When modifications or assistance are necessary, they are effective in engaging the student in class learning experiences, as harmonious as possible with typical practices in the class, and draw the least possible attention to the student.

When a student is left out of any class related learning activity, facilitators accept responsibility to search for ways to engage them more fully.

Consider

How does the Initiative support student engagement in all of the learning experiences the class offers?

- Seating & in-class participation
- Discussion sections & tutorials
- Lab work
- Homework
- Individual projects & major assignments
- Quizzes & exams
- Extra credit work
- Texts, materials, tools
- Group projects
- Study groups
- Field placements
- Internships
- Tutoring
- Others

Is the student left out of any of the learning experiences the class offers? If so, which learning experiences have been dropped and why? (This may have happened as part of a plan to accommodate an instructor or a student or it may have “just happened” through class interaction or student withdrawal.)

What adjustments or modifications does the student experience? These may be negotiated by the facilitator or adopted informally by the instructor, by fellow students, or by the student.

In what ways do these adjustments affect the student’s engagement with class work?

In what ways do these adjustments affect the way the student is seen and treated by the instructor and fellow students?

If the student requires a personal assistant in class, in what ways does the assistant’s work influence student engagement with class work?

How is the Initiative addressing any ways that the student is disengaged from class learning experiences?

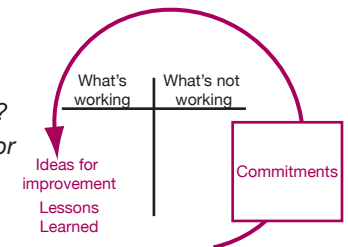
Remember

High expectations and engagement in valued experiences have great instructional power.

Students build a sense of self-efficacy by working hard to overcome obstacles and achieve ambitious goals.

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... What has worked?
- ... What has not worked?
- ... What are your ideas for improvement?
- ... What have you learned?



Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

2. Student belong to their class

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their ability to support faculty and fellow students to include the student in the life of the class.

Instructors take responsibility for the student as they would for any other member of their class. They draw on the experience of other faculty members or on the facilitator to improve the student's chances of learning, but they do not delegate faculty responsibilities to facilitators.

Fellow students recognize the student as one of their own. They involve them in group work and include them in informal conversations and activities.

Consider

How does the Initiative influence the instructor and fellow students to see and treat the student as a full member of the class?

How does the Initiative influence the instructor to assume responsibility for supporting the student's engagement in class learning activities? This includes not only issues related to course material, but also setting positive class norms for including the diversity introduced to the class by a student with a developmental disability, and dealing positively with issues on which an instructor would typically offer advice, counseling, or problem solving with a fellow student.

How does the Initiative encourage instructors and fellow students to accept greater responsibility if the facilitator has been delegated teaching or problem solving responsibilities that instructors or fellow students would typically perform?

How does the Initiative build and maintain productive connections between the instructor and other faculty and administrative allies?

How does the Initiative encourage positive connections between the student and fellow students? This may include problem solving with the instructor and fellow students as well as counseling the student on ways that they might increase their chances of positive belonging.

How does the Initiative recognize and minimize in class interpretations of students as "special", as human service clients, or as objects of benevolence or charity?

Remember

Belonging is essential to learning.

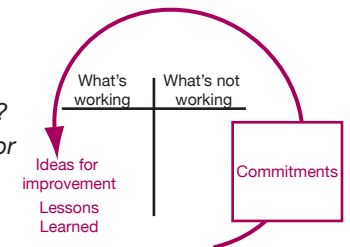
Belonging leads to positive relationships.

Alliance building is the facilitator's most powerful way of embedding the Initiative.

Dealing with problems together is a powerful way to build alliances.

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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3. Students pursue a coherent course of study

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their ability to influence their host university, college, or technical institute to offer students a typical pathway through their post-secondary experience and a coherent course of study.

Students enroll in faculties and programs that reflect their interests and form their identities, competencies, and social networks for post-graduation work and citizenship.

Consider

How does the Initiative reduce any differences between the student and fellow students in terms of the campus pathways defined by typical milestones and regular routines:

- Admission forms & process
- Official status
- Orientation
- Selection of a program of study
- Documentation of student achievement
- Convocation
- Student records
- Student identification
- Class selection & registration
- Financial transactions: Paying course, activity fees
- Other milestones or routines

How does the Initiative support students to select and enroll in a program of study? Enrollment can occur at admission or, in case a student can't identify a program interest on application, as soon as possible. Support can come from facilitators and from allies among faculty, administrators, or fellow students, especially those involved in the program of study of interest to the student.

How does the Initiative support students to move through their course of study in a coherent way?

How does the Initiative assure that there are productive links between the student's program of study and the jobs that the Initiative supports them to find? These links should grow stronger as the student progresses.

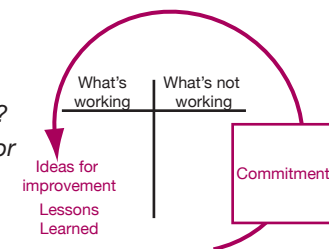
Remember

Inclusion means sharing fully in the same activities, routines, and rhythms as fellow students.

Necessary modifications should increase engagement, not pull the student away from a typical activity.

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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4. Students benefit from and contribute to campus life

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their ability to support students to belong to the life of their campus.

Students belong when they take part in the campus activities that mark the way through a term and academic year, take an active role in formal and informal campus associations, build friendships and social connections, and communicate their belonging to their campus and their program of study in their choice of activities, dress, and language.

Consider

How does the Initiative support students to participate in the events that mark the rhythm of the campus week, term, and year? Think of campus traditions, celebrations, athletic events, social gatherings, plays, concerts, lectures etc. Some of these events are campus wide, others may be specific to a program of study.

How does the Initiative support involvement in events of interest and encourage students to try new experiences that might prove interesting if sampled? In this and every dimension of campus involvement, support might come from fellow students, faculty members, and family who are allies of the Initiative as well as from facilitators.

How does the Initiative support students to join and contribute to campus and program associations that reflect and strengthen their interests and concerns?

How does the Initiative support students to pursue a social life on campus, extend their social networks, and make new friends?

How does the Initiative recognize and minimize the threats to inclusion that are posed by gathering students as a group?

How does the Initiative recognize and minimize on campus interpretations of students as “special”, as human service clients, or as objects of benevolence or charity?

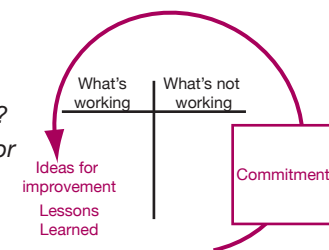
Remember

Inclusion means sharing fully in the culture of program, faculty, and campus.

Students are vulnerable to interpretations that set them apart and devalue them. These interpretations can be internalized by students or adopted by family members. Consciousness is essential to minimize this risk.

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

5. Students pursue an inclusive life-path after graduation

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their ability to support students to continue on an inclusive life-path after they graduate and move on from the Initiative's support.

Consider

How does the Initiative support the student to build up a relevant work history and bridge the employment during students' time with the Initiative into a post-graduation career path?

How does the Initiative bridge class and campus interests and experiences into the student's community life?

How does the Initiative promote student employability by documenting student accomplishment in their program of study and in campus life?

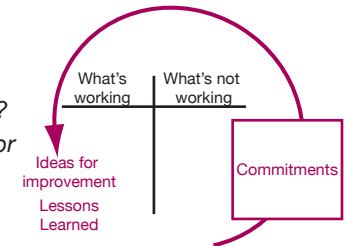
How does the Initiative encourage assistance for post-graduation employment from campus job placement resources: the student's instructors, program of study, and placement programs?

How does the Initiative assist student's families to get the knowledge and connections they will need to support their son or daughter to move farther along an inclusive life path?

How does the Initiative encourage the institution to engage students in its alumni activities and prepare graduates to make the best of the opportunities that come with being part of the alumni network?

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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6. Families provide leadership for inclusive post-secondary education and life-long inclusion

Benchmark

An effective Initiative continually improves its ability to support family leadership by seeking to understand and respond to family concerns, by encouraging families to connect to the family movement and family leadership education, and by inviting family members to contribute to the Initiative as allies and advisors.

Consider

How are families involved in advising or governing the Initiative?

How do families contribute to the work of the Initiative? This could involve orienting families who are considering or are new to inclusive post-secondary education, or supporting families who are adapting to a new understanding of their son's or daughter's capacities and interests, or assisting families in problem solving. It might include educating faculty or administrators about the family perspective on the worth of inclusion. It also could include representing the Initiative to campus administration or funders.

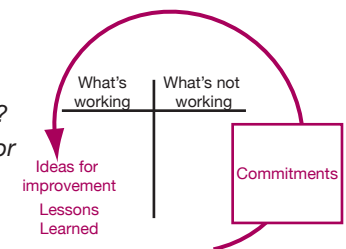
How are families who are considering application for inclusive post-secondary education informed and advised about its possibilities, requirements, and limitations?

How does the Initiative support families to strengthen their ties to the family movement for inclusion and participate in family leadership education?

How does the Initiative deal with situations in which family concerns might have a negative effect on the student's learning or belonging?

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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7. The Initiative is embedded

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their position in the post-secondary institution that they serve. They purposely and systematically build alliances and networks that include faculty, staff, and administration. These alliances are primary resources for recruiting and orienting instructors, opening new programs of study to students, developing strategies for instruction, problem solving, making necessary changes in campus practices, and advocating for the Initiative. Along with a network of connections with fellow students, these alliances provide the contacts and knowledge about campus life and culture that facilitators need in order to promote an authentic student experience.

Consider

How does the Initiative involve faculty, staff, and administrators in its work?

Which programs of study include students and how does the Initiative open a new program of study to students?

How are faculty, staff, and administrators involved in advising or governing the Initiative?

How do facilitators provide service to the institution? This might involve serving on committees, working on campus events, etc.

How does the Initiative increase a sense of institutional ownership of its work?

How does the Initiative increase institutional investment in inclusion?

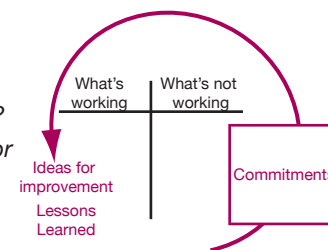
How does the Initiative assure the recruitment and success of students with substantial needs for assistance?

How does the Initiative detect and reduce or eliminate any practice, language, or imagery that interprets the Initiative as separate from ordinary post-secondary education. Such interpretations might include any suggestion that the Initiative is a human service program, or that students

are the objects of their fellow students' benevolence or charity, or that the Initiative does its work by congregating students.

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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8. The Initiative is safeguarded

Benchmark

Effective Initiatives continually improve their safeguards. They are aware of their vulnerabilities and rigorous in strengthening themselves.

Consider

How is the Initiative connected to other post-secondary inclusive education Initiatives and to the wider movement for inclusion?

How do facilitators and key members of governance or advisory groups educate themselves to develop and deepen their understanding of inclusion and their ability to discern alternatives that best promote inclusion in the long run when they are confronted with difficult and ambiguous situations?

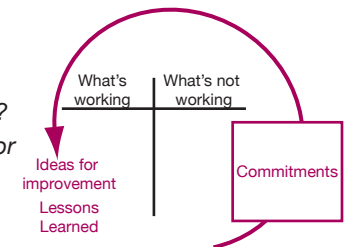
How does the Initiative encourage and strengthen reflective practice? This includes educating new facilitators and key allies in how to work reflectively and coaching experienced facilitators and allies to improve their ability to learn from their action.

How does the Initiative detect and correct or minimize the negative effects of compromises of the commitment to provide an authentic student experience?

How does the Initiative meet human service system requirements and minimize their effects on the Initiative's identification with post-secondary education and the focus of facilitator time on meeting their commitments?

When inquiring about Initiative action, ask...

- ... *What has worked?*
- ... *What has not worked?*
- ... *What are your ideas for improvement?*
- ... *What have you learned?*



Evidence of Achievement

**Evidence of Opportunity for
Improved Quality**

Evidence of Cause for Concern

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9. The Initiative supports an authentic student experience

To summarize your understanding of the Initiative’s capacity to support authentic student experiences, review the evidence identified for each benchmark and select the current practices and conditions that will, over time, have the most impact. Use the left column to identify assets that the Initiative should protect and build on. Use the center column to identify threats that the Initiative should respond to. Use the right column to identify the ways that this Initiative can contribute to the development of inclusive post-secondary education. These contributions to the growing edge may include innovative practices, powerful ways of framing and working on important issues, or significant questions raised by this Initiative’s experience.

6. Families provide leadership

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

7. The Initiative is embedded

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

8. The Initiative is safeguarded

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

1. Students are fully engaged in class learning experiences

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

2. Student belong to their class

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

3. Students pursue a coherent course of study

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

4. Students benefit from and contribute to campus life

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

5. Students pursue an inclusive life-path

Evidence of Achievement	Evidence of Opportunity for Improved Quality	Evidence of Cause for Concern

The standard: the experience of those fellow students who are gaining the greatest benefit from their education.

Authentic Student Experience

Increases the Chances for Authentic Student Experience	Decreases the Chances for Authentic Student Experience	Contributes to the Growing Edge of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Agenda for Improvement

Representatives of the team present the team's account of the Initiative's performance on the eight benchmarks to Initiative staff, advisors, and governors. This report informs the development of a written *Agenda for Improvement*. At least the *Agenda* specifies the steps the Initiative will take to deal with each area of concern identified by the team, important milestones and their anticipated completion date, and the person responsible. The *Agenda* may also include...

... specification of desired assistance to deal with areas of concern or development.

... description of any disagreements with the Team's account of the Initiative's performance.

... objectives for even greater improvement in areas of strength.

... identification of ways that the Initiative can contribute at the growing edge of the field of inclusive post-secondary education.

The team's responsibility is fulfilled when its representatives agree to the written *Agenda for Improvement*.

Benchmarks

1. Students are fully engaged in class learning experiences
2. Students belong to their classes
3. Students pursue a coherent course of study
4. Students benefit from and contribute to campus life
5. Students pursue an inclusive life-path after graduation
6. Families provide leadership for inclusive post-secondary education and life-long inclusion
7. The Initiative is embedded
8. The Initiative is safeguarded

Appendix:

Guides for Information Gathering & Reflection

The pages following include forms that give the team an overview of the post-secondary career and current weekly schedule for students and a summary of the Facilitator's thinking about the Initiative's current performance on the eight benchmarks.

These forms are available in a file that allows e-mail distribution.

Student Name

Program of Study

Graduation year

Please use this table to summarize the student's post-secondary education career.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Classes include placements				
Campus life identify roles & associations				
Employment note if volunteer				

Student Name _____

Please use this table to summarize the students current schedule. Include classes, study sessions, tutoring, student activities, and employment

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Weekend
Morning						
Afternoon						
Evening						

Use this table to identify current strengths and opportunities for improvement on the eight benchmarks. Review each benchmark in the manual for guidance and reminders.

	Current Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
1. Student engagement in learning		
2. Student belonging		
3. Students pursuit of a coherent course of study		
4. Students benefit & contribute to campus life		

5. Inclusive life-path after graduation		
6. Families provide leadership		
7. The Initiative is embedded		
8. The Initiative is safeguarded		