

## Inclusionary Practices and Systems:

# STUDENTS ENGAGED IN CORE CONTENT

### WHAT DOES STUDENTS ENGAGED IN CORE CONTENT MEAN OR LOOK LIKE?

Generally speaking, students that are engaged in core content means that they are receiving instruction that is aligned with grade level State Standards in each content area. Receiving core content instruction most commonly occurs in the general education setting where core content is taught by a general education teacher, who is the curriculum expert. Receiving core content can also occur through various co-teaching arrangements.

While engagement can look different for many students, for students to be actively engaged in core content requires regular and frequent access to materials and a teacher who is the expert on the curriculum. For all learners to be able to engage with the content requires differentiation of concepts so that all learners can make sufficient progress towards goals. When students are pulled out of class for behavior, other services, or remediation they are not able to engage with core content from the content area specialist or they miss out on the opportunity to engage entirely. To have students engaged in core content means that students have the opportunity to learn about content that has been identified as essential towards developing past the current grade level and being successful in future grade levels.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN CORE CONTENT? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Student engagement in core content as outlined by State Standards is important because it provides a framework for what students should achieve in each developmental domain as they move up through the grade levels. Not providing opportunities for engagement in core content limits student's ability to be successful in future academic and social domains. It is important that all learners engage in core content and that students are not limited to only receiving instruction based on their IEP goals.

Outcomes of students engaging in core content are:

- 1) More time spent learning from the content area specialist
- 2) Less time spent remediating skills missed from not attending core content instruction
- 3) Ability to build upon skills or concepts through each grade level

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CORE CONTENT:

- Core content should be provided at the most opportune time for learners
- Engagement as a definition might look different for all learners, but all learners should have equitable access to the core content
- Effective engagement in core content utilizes scaffolds and opportunities for enrichment
- Accommodations can be used when engaging in core content
- Modifications can also be used for identified students who have different long-term learning objectives (i.e. certificate of completion, non-diploma track)
- Individualized Education Plan goals should be aligned with Common Core State Standards

## **CASE STUDY: STUDENTS ENGAGED IN CORE CONTENT AT SEHOME HIGH SCHOOL**

Sehome High School, part of Bellingham School District, is located in north Washington. Sehome's journey towards developing more inclusive educational and social opportunities for all started back in 2007. Prior to 2007 Sehome served students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) through a self-contained or resource model. The 2007 school year brought about change as students were to receive access to core content in the general education setting, from the curriculum expert. This move marked for Sehome a commitment to serve students in general education as is their educational right.

2014 ushered in a new phase for Sehome as they embarked on a journey towards providing greater teaching and stronger academic support through co-teaching. The team at Sehome worked to build capacity together with a belief that all students can learn and that all students have the right to be engaged in core content with their same-aged peers. The Sehome co-teaching teams engaged in training and professional development opportunities such as standards based grading, co-teaching, and more. Sehome created a co-teaching summer boot camp in order to provide new teacher training and for new teaching teams to best learn about each other prior to the start of the school year. Additionally, Sehome worked to support their commitment to students being engaged in core content through a more inclusive interview process. Perhaps, most importantly, Sehome was able to make the necessary moves to leverage their master

schedule, which proved to be the shift needed to support the growth, development, and success of this model and commitment. Through leveraging the master schedule co-planning and co-teaching were prioritized.

While engagement looks different for all learners, the commitment to teach and learn together was strong and passing rates in core content area classes began to climb. Students who had been segregated in resources and self-contained settings began to show growth and success, not formerly seen through the pull out model. Student survey reported that students felt proud of their accomplishments and indicated co-teaching teams to be supportive of their own individual styles of learning so that they are able to access and express themselves in the best way possible. The combination of receiving instruction from the content area specialist (gened teacher) paired with the scaffolds and support provided by the education specialist (sped teacher) was enough for students, parents, and teachers alike to support the need to expand.

Sehome High Schools follows the larger district wide vision, "The Bellingham Promise" which boasts a strong collective commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, great teaching with strong support, and more. Sehome High school is an exemplary model of not only the Bellingham Promise, but a greater vision for equity whereby students are met with high expectations and support to be successful.

## **REFERENCES**

1. **Core content connectors:** [https://wiki.ncscpartners.org/index.php/Core\\_Content\\_Connectors](https://wiki.ncscpartners.org/index.php/Core_Content_Connectors)
2. **Kurth, J. A., & Keegan, L.** (2014). Development and use of curricular adaptations for students receiving special education service. *Journal of Special Education*, 48, 191–203. <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/agc/>
3. **TIES Center Tip #14** Academic standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities: [https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/foundations-of-inclusion-tips/academic-standards-for-students-with-significant-cognitive-disabilities-in-inclusive\\_classrooms](https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/foundations-of-inclusion-tips/academic-standards-for-students-with-significant-cognitive-disabilities-in-inclusive_classrooms)

## **RESOURCES**

**[Sehome Initial Webinar](#)**

**[Sehome Deep Dive Webinar \(master schedule, co-planning, co-instruction, and co-teaching\)](#)**

**[The Bellingham Promise](#)**