



Using the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)¹ to Support Each and Every Child's Full Participation

Each child is an individual who may achieve their learning and development goals earlier or later than their chronological age would suggest. Children who are learning more than one language, are culturally diverse, have disabilities or developmental delays, or who have had different early life experiences like trauma, may follow a course of development that differs from other children. Acknowledging these differences does not diminish the importance of the VELS to guide learning and development. Rather, it invites us to have a deep understanding of individual children, as well as family culture and circumstances. It also reminds us of how important it is for educators to know how to individualize to support each and every learner.

Here are some evidence-based practices that can be used to support the full participation of individual learners. For each practice, additional resources are listed.

Individualize the learning to make it work for each child

- Go from concrete to abstract, simple to complex, fewer steps/directions to more steps/ directions, and from more structured to more open.
- Explanations, demonstrations, positive feedback, and chances to practice will help each child to be more successful in learning new concepts.

For more ideas:

[Integrating Principles of Universal Design into the Early Childhood Curriculum](#)

["You Got It!" Teaching Social and Emotional Skills](#)

Use Universal Design for Learning principles

- Think about how to represent concepts in different ways (e.g., real apple, plastic apple, picture of an apple, printed word apple) that match the learning strengths of each child.
- Express concepts in multiple ways. Use words, gestures, movement, props, melodies, and other formats to strengthen the contextual cues.
- Engage and motivate children by using materials they are interested in and letting them make choices.

For more ideas:

[Universal Design for Learning: What You Need to Know](#)

¹ [The Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#)

Create responsive environments

- Reflect the cultures, languages, families, and communities of the children in the classroom.
- Arrange the indoor or outdoor learning space to support children’s active engagement in learning.
- Create adaptations in everyday activities and routines to ensure the ongoing participation of each child.

For more ideas:

[Teaching Young Dual Language Learners: A New Look at Planning the Environment](#)

[DEC Recommended Practices on Environment](#)

Provide visual cues and supports

- Use gestures, labels, outlines, lists, pictures, and signs to help children to learn both routines and information.

For more ideas:

[Take a Look: Visual Supports for Learning](#)

Use peers to support learning

- Use peers to model, help, and/or offer encouragement to support a child’s participation and membership.
- Small group activities can be very effective in supporting children who may need additional cues, models, or input.

For more ideas:

[Using Classroom Activities and Routines as Opportunities to Support Peer Interaction](#)

Engage families as allies in supporting each child

- Use familiar words, toys, routines, music, books, and strategies from home to bolster learning in other settings.
- Partner with families to share new concepts that are being introduced. They will be able to reinforce and extend the learning at home.

For more ideas:

[DEC Recommended Practices on Families](#)

[Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades](#)