

Demonstration Classroom: Learning Labs

Expanding the LRE Continuum to Meet Student Needs

Demonstration classrooms (“demos”) are re-envisioned professional development platforms and tools that offer educators a chance to observe evidence-based instructional practices in real-time, with an opportunity to debrief what they saw and discuss how they can incorporate the practices into their own classrooms. The Co-op is building a network of demos across the District of Columbia, each highlighting an evidence-based practice, serving as models for schools striving to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Demo Discovery: Learning Labs and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

DC Bilingual Public Charter School (DCB) hosts three targeted Learning Labs that provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum by creating intentional, flexible, and neurodiverse-affirming spaces where teachers and students can focus on academic and social-emotional growth. In the Learning Labs, students work on closing skill gaps in reading, math, and writing through targeted evidence-based interventions implemented with fidelity. Some students may spend 30 minutes in a Learning Lab receiving targeted intervention, while others may spend a majority of their day, based on their unique needs. Sensory-friendly materials and calming spaces address each student’s individual preferences.

Demo Details

- **Materials:** The Learning Labs utilize a variety of intervention materials including Wilson Reading intervention, Read Naturally, and Touch Math, as well as low tech tools such as flexible seating options, calming corners, and sensory items.
- **Training:** Teachers received training and coaching in the intervention programs as well as administrative support to develop student participation criteria and classroom scheduling tools. The Administrative team also received coaching to fine tune the classrooms’ purpose, set common expectations for structure and outcomes, as well as explore maximizing use of the model and space for a broader range of students.
- **Infrastructure:** Master schedules support students from across the school receiving intervention at designated times; the classrooms are intentionally designed to meet the needs of students across multiple grade levels, including students with various sensory and behavioral, as well as academic, needs.

Demo Data

English Language Arts scores for students with disabilities at DCB have steadily improved since starting the Learning Labs in SY18-19. In SY22-23, DCB students with disabilities outperformed peers in DC by 9 percentage points on PARCC (17% proficient compared to 8.3% citywide). In Math, DCB’s students with disabilities also outperformed peers in SY22-23 (13% compared to 5.5% for DC overall).

“[The Demo Classrooms] have allowed DC Bilingual PCS (DCB) to give students the flexibility of learning environments and instruction they need to be successful. It has completely changed how we approach specialized instruction at DCB.” - Rohini Ramnath, former Principal, DCB

Learn more about the Co-op’s demo classrooms: www.specialedcoop.org