

Delivering the Expanded Core with Purpose

APH Access Academy Webinar 3 With Robbin Clark, MA EdS

This webinar completes a progression

Webinar 1 — Change the lens

Rethink ECC instruction by moving from coverage toward meaningful, student-centered learning.

Webinar 2 — Connect the people

Move from responsibility resting primarily with one professional toward shared, intentional implementation.

Webinar 3 — Design delivery with purpose

Move from one-size-fits-all ECC delivery toward purposeful learning designed for this student, this team, and this context.

Today

How do we turn that thinking into learning that actually happens for an individual student?

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We Are All Entering From Different Places

Professional learning works best when we make room for different starting points.

CONNECT

Some ideas may connect immediately to what you already believe and do.

STRETCH

Some ideas may challenge a familiar way of thinking or practicing.

SIT WITH IT

Some ideas may need time before you decide what you think.

The invitation is simply to be open.

3 Today's big idea

Traditionally, the ECC is presented as nine distinct areas. That gives us a comprehensive picture of what students with visual impairments may need to learn—but it can also feel like a lot to hold at once.

The collapsed framework gives us a more efficient way to see the ECC without reducing what it includes. It organizes the nine areas into broader lenses that help us look at the student, notice patterns, and identify where meaningful learning may be needed.

The framework is shared, but the curriculum is individualized: the shared framework helps us see the full range of possible learning, while assessment and what we know about the student determine which learning becomes part of that student's Expanded Core Curriculum.

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Today's big idea

The ECC collapsed framework helps us recognize what learning is possible.

The individualized ECC curriculum determines what learning matters for this student.

The multipathway approach, within the ECC Delivery Framework, helps us design how that learning can be developed and used.

- Collapsed Framework = shared lens for recognizing possibilities.
- Curriculum = individualized decisions about what matters.
- Multipathway approach = flexible way to design delivery around the learner, learning, and context.

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Four moves you can begin using now

To make this practical, I've organized purposeful ECC decision-making into four manageable moves. Together, they help us move from noticing meaningful learning to designing delivery and using evidence to decide what comes next.

1. Notice the learning
2. Choose and clarify
3. Connect the pathways
4. Look for learning and adjust
 - Use the ECC collapsed framework to discover what this student may need to learn. Select a meaningful starting point and describe what successful learning could look like.
 - Determine how specialized instruction, existing opportunities, and meaningful team contributions can work together.
 - Document evidence of progress and use it to determine what happens next.

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Four moves you can begin using now

Enter at a pace that works for you—but keep the system connected.

You may not be ready to fully develop every move at once, and you do not need to implement every tool or strategy. Start where you have capacity and build over time.

But these moves are related and intentionally sequential. As you adapt, simplify, or begin with only part of the process, check that the decisions still connect:

- What we notice should inform what we prioritize.
- What we prioritize should guide how we design delivery.
- How we deliver should produce evidence that informs what happens next.

Flexible implementation should not become fragmented implementation. The goal is coherence—not completeness. These are not four new programs or four additional responsibilities. They are four manageable moves for making more purposeful ECC decisions.

Today is your first opportunity to see how the four moves work together. Future professional learning can go deeper into the assessment, individualized curriculum, delivery, and evidence tools behind each one.

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Move 1: Notice the learning

Use the ECC collapsed framework to discover what this student may need to learn.

What learning might be missing, underdeveloped, or fragmented for this student?

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Three Collapsed ECC Framework Domains

The traditional nine ECC areas remain important. The framework domains help us organize the complexity and see relationships among learning needs. Start with any domain. There is no required order.

Access

Compensatory Access, Sensory Efficiency, Use of Assistive Technology

Independent Living

Social interaction skills, Recreation & Leisure, Independent Living Skills

Community Readiness

Career Education, Self-Determination, Orientation & Mobility

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Start with the ECC collapsed framework

The traditional nine ECC areas remain important. The collapsed framework organizes them into three broader domains so we can see relationships, ask better questions, and enter the ECC from different starting points.

Access

How does the student access information, learning, environments, and experiences?

Independent Living

How does the student manage responsibilities, routines, decisions, and everyday demands?

Community Readiness

How does the student participate, contribute, communicate, navigate relationships, and prepare for future environments?

There is no required starting domain. The framework helps us recognize possibilities; it does not determine the student's curriculum.

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Discover the Expanded Core in everyday learning

ECC learning does not only happen during an ECC lesson. Everyday school experiences routinely require students to communicate, make decisions, solve problems, adapt, contribute, advocate, and take increasing ownership.

Much of this learning develops through observation, repeated participation, feedback, and experience. Vision loss can change access to that incidental learning.

Example we will revisit: participating in a group project/group learning

The academic task may be the same for everyone, but the ECC learning embedded within it may be very different for an individual student. A group project can reveal learning about access, communication, decision-making, collaboration, self-advocacy, contribution, responsibility, and participation.

Our job is to notice what this student may need to learn more intentionally—not to create a separate ECC activity for everything we notice.

One activity. Three ways to notice ECC learning.

Participating in a group project

Access

- Can the student access the shared materials and information?
- Can they follow who is speaking and what the group is deciding?
- Do they have equitable access to visual information other students are using?

Independent Living

- Can the student understand and manage their role?
- Can they keep track of their responsibility without unnecessary adult direction?
- How do they initiate or resume their part of the work?

Community Readiness

- Can the student contribute ideas and communicate preferences?
- Can they negotiate responsibilities, respond to peers, and advocate for what they need?
- Are they participating as a member of the group—not simply being physically included?

The activity stays the same. What we notice about this student's learning changes with the lens.

See the learning—not just participation

A student can appear to be participating while other people are carrying much of the learning. Look beyond whether the project was completed.

Ask:

- Is the student actively influencing the work?

- Are they initiating, responding, deciding, or contributing?
- Are supports enabling participation—or unintentionally replacing it?
- Does the student know what their role is and why it matters?
- When specialized teaching occurs separately, does that learning reconnect to the shared experience?

Participation is not simply being present. We are looking for meaningful access, agency, contribution, and learning.

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Seeing ECC learning with complex learners

The observable behaviors may look different, but the question remains the same: How is this student actively participating in and influencing the learning experience?

- Notice individualized forms of communication, including body movement, facial expression, visual response, gestures, objects, AAC, or other established systems.
- Notice whether adults recognize and respond consistently to those communications.
- Notice whether the student receives adequate processing and wait time.
- Notice whether the activity is predictable enough for the student to anticipate what is happening and whether meaningful choices are available.
- Notice whether the student can initiate, refuse, continue, choose, direct assistance, or otherwise influence the experience.

Independence does not always mean doing something without support. Agency may mean directing, choosing, communicating, anticipating, or influencing what happens while appropriate support remains in place.

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Notice first. Investigate next.

Seeing a possible gap does not automatically tell us what to teach. A student may not be fully participating because information is inaccessible, a prerequisite skill is underdeveloped, opportunities have been limited, more explicit instruction or practice is

needed, adults are doing too much, the opportunity itself is missing, or several conditions are interacting.

Use the ECC collapsed framework alongside multiple sources of information:

- available ECC assessment findings and progress data
- student and family perspectives
- classroom, paraeducator, specialist, and team observations
- what happens across different settings and everyday learning opportunities

HLP 4: Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.

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Move 1 recap: Notice the learning

Use the move this way:

1. Choose a lens within the ECC collapsed framework: Access, Independent Living, or Community Readiness.
2. Look within an everyday experience rather than waiting for a separate ECC activity.
3. Look beyond task completion to participation, communication, agency, and learning.
4. Notice possible gaps, but investigate before assuming the cause.
5. Use multiple perspectives and sources of information to develop a clearer picture.

Look-fors: You are activating this move when...

- you ask what the student is learning—not only what they completed.
- you deliberately look for ECC within ordinary classes, routines, and experiences.
- you notice participation, agency, communication, access, and support.
- you pause to investigate before labeling the student's difficulty as a deficit.

Checkpoint

Can I identify one potential ECC learning need for this student and explain what I am noticing that makes it worth investigating?

Move 1 shifts

- From seeing the activity → to seeing the learning within the activity.
- From immediately naming a student deficit → to investigating the interaction among skills, access, opportunities, instruction, support, and experience.
- From beginning with everything the ECC says a student could learn → to using the ECC collapsed framework to discover what this particular student may need to learn.

The ECC collapsed framework is the lens. Individualized learning comes next.

Move 2: Choose and clarify

Select a meaningful starting point and make the intended learning visible.

What makes sense to begin with for this student—and what would successful learning look like?

Impact and momentum: Two ways to begin

Exploring the ECC collapsed framework may reveal several meaningful learning needs for one student. You cannot address everything at once, and not every need requires the same urgency or instructional attention. The next decision is not simply “What could we teach?” It is “Where would it make sense to begin for this student?”

Consider this student, this team, and the intended learning: Does it make more sense to begin with a high-impact priority or a momentum-building opportunity?

Impact and momentum are not different types of students or ECC goals. They are two ways to reason about a purposeful entry point. They can also work together.

The goal is not to make a perfect decision. It is to make a purposeful one that gives the student and team a direction for what comes next.

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Impact and momentum: Breadcrumbs for the decision

Impact

Begin with learning that could make a meaningful difference in this student's current and future opportunities.

Ask: What could open doors to other skills, experiences, participation, relationships, or greater independence?

Look for leverage: a relatively small or focused learning experience can be high impact if it changes what becomes possible for this student.

Examples: a splinter skill, missing concept, communication behavior, or self-advocacy move that unlocks broader access.

Momentum

Begin with a meaningful opportunity you can act on now and use to build additional learning.

Ask: Where could we begin successfully and build from there?

Look for a real opportunity: an existing routine, upcoming experience, team opening, or manageable instructional step that can produce useful learning and information.

Momentum is not "easy" or "convenient." It is an intentional first step that can move the student and team toward broader learning.

Impact tells us where we may want to go. Momentum can help us determine where to begin.

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Three guardrails for selecting an initial ECC priority

You do not have to prove that you identified the single highest-impact ECC priority. You need a meaningful, well-reasoned place to begin. Choose a meaningful starting point, not a perfect one.

Guardrail 1. Keep the student at the center.

Select learning because it matters for this student—not because it appears on a checklist. The starting point may be a small learning experience, splinter skill, missing concept, communication behavior, or emerging competency that would make a real difference for this student. Consider the student's interests, preferences, current barriers, and perspective whenever possible.

Guardrail 2. Let feasibility shape the starting point—not determine its value.

Time, team capacity, resources, and existing opportunities are legitimate conditions to consider. Use them to decide how and where to begin—not to decide what the student deserves to learn. A convenient activity is not automatically a meaningful priority.

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Three guardrails for selecting an initial ECC priority

Guardrail 3. Give yourself permission to adjust.

Your first priority is an informed starting point, not a permanent commitment. Instruction itself gives us new information. As the student responds, we can refine the target, intensify support, change the pathway, or select the next priority.

These guardrails are important because selecting a starting priority always involves judgment, and without clear boundaries it is easy for convenience, available activities, or adult priorities to drive the decision. They help keep the starting point student-centered, meaningful, and flexible enough to adjust as new learning and evidence emerge.

Confidence check

Can I explain why this learning matters for this student, why beginning here makes sense, and what I hope it will make possible?

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From a potential need to individualized learning

Return to the group-project example introduced in Move 1.

Suppose our observations and investigation suggest that the student is often physically included in collaborative work but is not consistently contributing, managing a role, communicating directly with peers, or advocating when information is inaccessible.

“Group participation” names a broad area. It is not yet an individualized curriculum.

Now ask: What do we actually want this student to know, understand, and do?

Know

what their role is and what information/materials they need.

Understand

that group membership means contributing, communicating, responding to others, and asking for what is needed.

Do

use accessible strategies to track their responsibility, contribute an idea or product, communicate with peers, and seek clarification or assistance when necessary.

The activity is the group project. The individualized learning is what the student is developing through it.

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Introducing the ECC instructional snapshot

An ECC instructional snapshot is one manageable piece of individualized ECC learning that we intentionally define, teach, observe, and connect to what comes next.

It is not the student’s entire ECC curriculum, a new legal document, or a substitute for the IEP. It is a practical planning unit that helps us stop carrying the weight of “everything this student needs” at once.

Every ECC instructional snapshot identifies four components:

1. Meaningful ECC priority: What learning matters for this student, and why?
2. Learning target: What specifically do we want this student to know, understand, or do?
3. Initial instructional opportunity: Where can we begin teaching and practicing this learning?
4. Evidence of learning: What will we document to determine whether the student is making progress?

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Introducing the ECC instructional snapshot

The ECC instructional snapshot helps us move from a broad learning priority to a manageable instructional focus.

A useful snapshot makes four things visible:

- the meaningful learning we are targeting
- what successful learning could look like for this student
- where and how the learning can be developed
- what evidence will show us progress and inform the next move

Use a snapshot when you need to turn a broad ECC priority into something the student and team can actually develop and see.

Remember: The snapshot is one manageable piece of the individualized ECC curriculum—not the entire individualized ECC curriculum or a complete delivery plan.

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A simple instructional snapshot

What we've noticed

During group projects, the student understands the academic content but often waits for an adult to help them enter the conversation. Peers sometimes divide responsibilities and make decisions before the student has an opportunity to contribute.

Here's how we can turn what we've noticed into a manageable ECC instructional snapshot:

1. Meaningful ECC priority — What learning matters, and why?

Develop the communication and self-determination skills the student needs to contribute as an active group member rather than depending on an adult to facilitate peer interactions.

2. Successful learning — What do we want the student to demonstrate?

The student enters a group discussion, contributes an idea, and asks peers for information or clarification when needed.

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3. Initial instructional opportunity — Where can we begin?

Explicitly teach and rehearse one strategy for entering a discussion. Then provide an opportunity to practice it during an upcoming small-group academic project.

4. Evidence of learning — What will we document?

Record whether the student initiates communication with peers, contributes an idea, and asks for information. Note the type and amount of support needed. Use a brief observation record or single-point rubric to document progress.

Why this is more useful than “participate in a group project”:

- It names the learning rather than only the activity.
- It gives the student and team something concrete to develop and notice.
- It can be practiced in more than one group-learning situation.
- It can grow into broader communication, self-determination, collaboration, career, and independence competencies.

HLP 11 — Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals.

HLP 12 — Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal.

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A simple instructional snapshot for students with complex learning needs

What we've noticed

During familiar activities, adults may step in quickly and make choices before the student has a chance to communicate what they want. Sometimes adults also miss or do not consistently respond to the student's communication clues.

Here's how we can turn what we've noticed into a manageable ECC instructional snapshot:

1. Meaningful ECC priority — What learning matters, and why?

Help the student have more say in what happens by giving them meaningful chances to communicate choices, preferences, and needs during familiar activities.

2. Successful learning — What do we want the student to demonstrate?

The student uses their symbol system to communicate a choice, preference, request, or refusal.

The team acknowledges the communication so the student knows, "We saw that. Your communication mattered." Then the team responds in a way that matches the student's message whenever possible.

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3. Initial instructional opportunity — Where can we begin?

Choose one familiar activity with a natural choice point.

- Present the choices using the student's familiar symbol system.
- Pause after presenting the choices instead of immediately prompting again or making the choice for the student.
- Use the student's known processing time as the starting point.
- If the team has not identified one yet, agree on a consistent wait-time routine and watch carefully before adding another prompt.

During that pause, look for the student's established communication clues—such as reaching toward a symbol, changing gaze, moving their body, vocalizing, or using another familiar response.

Acknowledge the response immediately and show the student that their communication had an effect on what happens next.

4. Evidence of learning — What will we document?

Look for and record:

- whether the student responds at the choice point,
- which symbol or communication response they use,
- whether their response becomes more consistent over time,
- what level of prompting or support was needed,
- how long it takes them to respond,
- and whether adults recognized and responded to the communication consistently.

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For some students, video may be the clearest evidence because subtle movements, shifts in gaze, facial expressions, or timing can be difficult to capture accurately in written notes. The learning is not simply “complete the activity independently.” The learning may be to communicate, choose, initiate, refuse, continue, direct, or influence what happens.

Individualization changes what successful learning looks like—not whether meaningful learning is expected.

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Move 2 recap: Choose and clarify

Use the move this way:

1. Use impact or momentum to identify a meaningful place to begin.
2. Explain why the learning matters for this particular student.
3. Move from a broad need or activity to an observable description of successful learning.
4. Use an ECC instructional snapshot to make one manageable piece of learning visible.

5. Let the snapshot connect today's learning to broader competencies without designing the entire ECC curriculum at once.

Look-fors: You are activating this move when...

- you can explain why this learning matters—not just name an ECC area.
- your starting point is small enough to act on but meaningful enough to matter.
- you can describe what the student will know, understand, or do.
- the learning target is clearer than the activity used to teach it.

Checkpoint

Can I describe what I want this student to learn—not merely what activity I want them to complete?

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Move 2 shifts

- From trying to address everything that is missing → to selecting one purposeful place to begin.
- From naming an ECC area or activity → to making the intended student learning visible.
- From designing instruction around a list of deficits → to designing backward from meaningful learning we want the student to achieve.

One manageable snapshot can become the bridge between a broad ECC need and purposeful delivery.

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Move 3: Design the delivery

Build a realistic plan for how the intended learning will be developed.

How can this learning happen with this student, this team, and the opportunities available?

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Multipathway Planning Approach

The ECC is broad, interconnected, and highly individualized.

That is one of its strengths—but it can also leave us overwhelmed by how much there is to consider, especially when students, teams, schedules, opportunities, and support needs are all different.

We cannot use a one-size-fits-all ECC approach any more than we can use one-size-fits-all instruction.

Multipathway planning is the process of taking one individualized ECC learning target and deliberately designing the connected routes that can help the student develop and use it.

A pathway is simply one route through which the student can learn, practice, apply, or strengthen the intended learning.

A multipathway approach helps us decide:

- which routes are actually needed,
- which should come first,
- which can happen together,
- and how they can reinforce one another.

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Why a multipathway approach?

Shared responsibility gives us the people. Now we need a way to intentionally connect their contributions to the learning.

We also cannot assume that the same ECC delivery approach will work across different learners, learning needs, teams, settings, schedules, and service models.

A student receiving itinerant services, a student in a school for the blind, and a student with complex support needs may all be working toward meaningful ECC learning—but the way that learning is developed may need to look very different.

We need a way to decide how the learning can actually happen for this student, with this team, in this context.

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Why a multipathway approach?

That is where the multipathway approach comes in.

It helps us:

- start with one individualized ECC learning target,
- consider what this student needs,
- account for the team, setting, time, opportunities, and available supports,
- protect the specialized expertise the student needs,
- and identify realistic ways the learning can be developed and used.

This is not more ECC. It is a way to organize the learning we have already identified and design a realistic way to make it happen.

A multipathway approach does not mean “everyone does a little ECC.” It means the intended learning is clear enough that we can decide what requires specialized expertise, where practice is meaningful, who can contribute, and how the experiences reinforce one another.

The intended learning provides the direction. The student’s needs and available conditions inform the pathway.

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Specialized instruction remains specialized

Some ECC learning requires the TSVI’s vision-specific expertise in part or in whole.

The TSVI brings specialized knowledge about how vision impairment affects:

- concept development and incidental learning,
- sensory access and how a student gathers information,
- interaction with environments,

- access tools and assistive technology,
- and the development and transfer of ECC competencies.

That expertise goes beyond tutoring, adapting assignments, or helping a student keep up with classwork. It helps the team understand why a student may be missing information, what access or instruction is needed, and how learning can become usable across real environments.

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Specialized instruction remains specialized

The TSVI may provide all or part of the specialized instruction needed to establish the learning. Other educators can then provide explicit instruction, practice, feedback, and authentic opportunities within their own settings and areas of expertise. Delivering the Expanded Core with purpose requires a shift from one-size-fits-all delivery toward purposeful, individualized ECC experiences.

Distributed responsibility does not mean diluted expertise.

ECC learning is student-owned. Responsibility for developing it can be distributed. Specialized expertise remains specialized.

The TSVI is not the sole provider of every ECC opportunity—but the TSVI’s vision-specific expertise cannot simply be reassigned to someone else.

HLP 1 — Collaborate with professionals to increase student success; HLP 16 — Use explicit instruction.

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Find the learning opportunities already available

Return to the student learning to participate more independently and meaningfully in group work. The TSVI does not need to create a separate “group-project ECC activity.”

Authentic pathways might already exist in a science lab team, history presentation, literature circle, career-technical project, student committee, performing arts rehearsal, club, residential program, community experience, or family responsibility.

The important question is not: Where can we fit in ECC?

It is: Where does this student already encounter authentic situations that require the intended ECC learning?

Existing experiences become instructional pathways when the learning is made intentional, the student has equitable access, and someone is prepared to notice and support the learning.

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Connect the people to something concrete

Webinar 2 emphasized shared responsibility. A clear ECC instructional snapshot gives the team something specific to share responsibility for.

For the group-project snapshot:

TSVI

explicitly teaches an accessible strategy for understanding the assignment, tracking the student's role, and advocating when information is inaccessible.

Classroom teacher

creates the authentic group-learning opportunity, communicates expectations clearly, and notices whether the student is contributing rather than merely present.

Peers

interact directly with the student rather than automatically relying on an adult intermediary.

Student

uses the strategy, contributes, communicates, problem solves, and increasingly recognizes what support is useful.

The team does not need to become ECC experts. They need to understand the learning well enough to recognize and support it.

HLP 1 connection: Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.

Where this is going: ECC Delivery Frameworks

Multipathway planning approach is also informing a larger piece of my 21st Century ECC work: ECC Delivery Frameworks.

I am currently researching and developing these frameworks as practical ways to help teams make more intentional decisions about how ECC is delivered across different students, settings, and service models.

ECC Delivery Frameworks help teams match the delivery model to the student by considering the learning target, the student's needs, the setting, the team, and the pathways available.

The goal is not to fit the student into a predetermined ECC model. The goal is to design a delivery model that fits the student.

Where this is going: ECC Delivery Frameworks

A delivery framework should help teams organize the student's intended learning, specialized instructional requirements, team capacity, available opportunities, setting, and evidence of progress so they can make purposeful delivery decisions.

Different contexts may need different applications. Itinerant practice, schools for the blind, deafblindness, complex learners, residential programs, transition planning and other settings will not look identical—but the same student-centered reasoning can guide them.

This is emerging work. Today's multipathway approach moves give you an early, practical way to begin using the thinking now.

Move 3 recap: Design the delivery

Use the move this way:

1. Start with the intended learning—not with an available activity or person.
2. Identify what requires specialized expertise or explicit instruction.
3. Find authentic opportunities where the learning can be developed and used.
4. Help other people see the learning and understand how they can contribute.
5. Connect the pathways so experiences reinforce rather than fragment the learning.
6. Adjust the combination of pathways to fit the student and context.

Look-fors: You are activating this move when...

- you can name what only specialized expertise should provide.
- you identify authentic places where the same learning can be practiced or applied.
- team members know the learning target—not just an activity to do.
- separate instruction intentionally reconnects to the student's real environments.
- you change the pathway when the student or context tells you it is needed.

Checkpoint

Can I identify at least one specialized contribution, one authentic opportunity, and one meaningful way another person could support this learning?

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Move 3 shifts

- From assuming ECC instruction must occur primarily during TSVI time → to intentionally connecting specialized instruction with learning opportunities across the student's life.
- From asking others to “work on ECC” → to giving them a specific learning target they can recognize and support.
- From choosing delivery based primarily on what is available → to allowing the intended learning to guide how available people, settings, and opportunities are used.

Multipathway delivery approach distributes responsibility without diluting specialized expertise.

Move 4: Look for learning and adjust

Document meaningful evidence of progress and use it to decide what happens next.

What will count as evidence that the student is learning—and how will we preserve that evidence?

Look for learning and adjust

Without evidence, ECC can easily become a collection of activities, isolated lessons, or anecdotes instead of a learning progression.

We need evidence not just to show that instruction occurred, but to understand whether the intended ECC learning is actually developing across time and contexts.

Evidence helps us see:

- what the student is learning,
- what support is helping,
- whether the learning is becoming more consistent or usable,
- whether it is beginning to transfer,
- and what the next instructional move should be.

The goal is not documentation for documentation's sake. The goal is to make the learning visible enough that we can respond to it.

Build a simple formative-assessment trail

Choose documentation that fits the learning. Useful options include:

- single-point or developmental proficiency rubrics

- brief observation/data sheets with the target behavior and level of support
- student exit tickets, self-ratings, reflections, or goal checks
- work samples or screenshots
- short video clips or photos when visual/behavioral evidence is difficult to capture in words
- structured team observation notes across settings or partners

The goal is not more paperwork. The goal is usable evidence that helps us see how the ECC learning is developing, explain our decisions, and decide what should happen next.

HLP 6: Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.

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5 Minute PD: From vague documentation to usable evidence

Think of the difference between compliant language and defensible documentation: the stronger record shows the learning, the conditions, and the reasoning behind the next decision.

Example 1: Group project

Too vague

“Student participated in a group project.”

Usable evidence

“During a 20-minute planning task, the student independently accessed the shared document, contributed two ideas, requested clarification of one inaccessible visual, and responded directly to a peer question without adult mediation.”

Possible tools: brief rubric + observation note + student reflection/exit ticket.

Example 2: Communication/agency

Too vague

“Student made choices.”

Usable evidence

“Across four familiar routines, the student communicated a choice in 3/4 opportunities after a 10-second wait period using the established reach + vocalization pattern; team video review confirmed the response was consistent and differentiated from baseline movement.”

Possible tools: short video + data sheet + team interpretation note.

Usable evidence shows the learning, the conditions, and enough detail to support the next instructional decision.

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For complex learners, video can preserve what words miss

Some of the most meaningful progress for a student with complex learning needs may be subtle: a change in gaze, body movement, latency, vocalization, anticipation, initiation, or response pattern.

Narrative notes still matter—but trying to describe subtle, intentional movement in words alone can lose important information.

A short, purposeful video sample can help the team:

- compare the student’s response across time or even the school day
- look together for intentionality and consistency
- notice whether wait time, positioning, communication partners, or environmental conditions change performance
- develop shared interpretation of the student’s communication

Video should be collected and stored according to school/district privacy requirements. Pair it with a brief written note or rubric so the evidence becomes usable progress-monitoring data—not simply a clip we remember.

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Progress looks different across learners

Meaningful progress should be defined by the intended learning—not by a single idea of independence.

Without a clear definition of progress, observations can become subjective:

- “She seemed more confident.”
- “He did better today.”
- “She was more independent.”

Define progress in a way that reflects what meaningful learning looks like for this student.

That may mean looking for observable and measurable changes in:

- agency,
- communication,
- participation,
- initiation,
- decision-making,
- consistency,
- use of support,
- adaptability,
- or transfer.

Progress does not always mean less physical support. Greater independence may show up as greater agency, communication, participation, decision-making, or influence over what happens.

If we define progress clearly, we are better able to recognize it, document it, and use it to decide what comes next.

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Make progress visible to the student

Whenever possible, progress should not only be measurable to the team—it should also be understandable to the student.

When students know what they are working toward and what progress looks like, they can participate in monitoring their own learning.

Make the learning and success criteria visible in a way the student can access and understand.

This might include:

- a student-friendly learning target,
- a simple rubric or continuum,
- self-reflection,
- student-selected evidence,
- progress tracking,
- or a brief conversation about what changed and what comes next.

This turns progress monitoring into another opportunity to develop self-awareness, agency, and self-determination.

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Use the evidence to decide what happens next

Formative evidence is not simply something we collect for documentation. It should change what we do.

Based on the evidence, we may continue the current pathway, provide more explicit instruction, change the level/type of support, add another practice opportunity, introduce another partner or setting, refine the target, or build the next ECC instructional snapshot.

Keep the evidence connected across planning horizons:

- Instructional snapshot — What are we developing and monitoring right now?
- Annual IEP priorities/progress — What meaningful growth are we documenting across the year?
- Broader ECC review — What does accumulated evidence tell us about the student's next 3–5 years of learning needs, opportunities, and competencies?

A comprehensive ECC curriculum review at the three-year reevaluation cycle is an emerging planning practice within this work—not a separate IDEA legal requirement. The purpose is to use accumulated evidence to look forward rather than wait for gaps to become urgent.

Look for transfer—and for what can travel

A skill demonstrated only with one person, in one activity, or under one set of conditions may not yet be usable learning. Transfer often needs to be planned, taught, practiced, and observed.

Ask:

Can the student use the learning with another person, in another class or routine, in the community, when something changes, or when less prompting is available?

Ask what part of the learning is sustainable and adaptable—what can continue to serve the student over time, and what can flex when the people, setting, tools, expectations, or supports change.

Sustainable

What strategy, communication behavior, decision process, or self-advocacy move can continue to serve the student over time?

Adaptable

What can the student modify when the setting, people, tools, expectations, or supports change?

HLP 21: Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.

Move 4 recap: Look for learning and adjust

Use the move this way:

1. Decide what evidence would actually demonstrate the intended learning.
2. Choose a simple formative-assessment method and document the learning over time.

3. Look beyond activity completion to changes in participation, agency, communication, independence, consistency, and support.
4. Plan opportunities for the student to transfer, sustain, and adapt the learning beyond the original context.
5. Use the evidence to adjust the pathway, refine the target, or identify the next instructional snapshot.

Look-fors: You are activating this move when...

- you can show a paper trail—not just say that progress happened.
- your data describe the learning, conditions, support, and change over time.
- you intentionally collect evidence across people, settings, or opportunities.
- you use the evidence to explain the next instructional decision.
- the student is increasingly able to sustain or adapt useful learning.

Checkpoint

Can I name one observable sign of learning, one way I will document it, and one place where I want to see the learning transfer?

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Move 4 shifts

- From documenting that instruction occurred → to documenting evidence that meaningful learning occurred.
- From measuring independence only by reduced adult support → to noticing agency, communication, participation, decision-making, and appropriate use of support.
- From treating transfer as something we hope will happen → to intentionally building opportunities for learning to travel, sustain, and adapt across people, activities, and environments.

Assessment becomes part of instruction: evidence tells us what to keep, change, connect, or teach next.

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The High-Leverage Practices underneath the moves

The four moves are an emerging way of organizing ECC decision-making. The instructional practices within them align with established High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities.

Notice the learning

HLP 4: Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.

Choose and clarify

HLP 11: Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals; HLP 12: Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal.

Connect the pathways

HLP 1: Collaborate with professionals to increase student success; HLP 16: Use explicit instruction; HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment where relevant.

Look for learning and adjust

HLP 6: Use assessment data to analyze instruction and make adjustments; HLP 21: Teach students to maintain and generalize learning across time and settings.

I am intentionally aligning the developing 21st Century ECC work with the High-Leverage Practices in Special Education. This helps strengthen ECC instruction, keep our practice connected to the broader evidence base in special education, and bring research-informed instructional practices into the way we design and deliver individualized ECC learning.

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You can start smaller than you think

You do not need to redesign your entire ECC instructional approach tomorrow.

Start by choosing one student and one familiar learning experience. Use the four moves to look more intentionally at what is already happening.

You might:

- notice ECC learning you had not previously recognized,
- identify one meaningful priority,
- clarify what successful learning could look like,
- connect one additional pathway or team contribution,
- or improve how you document progress and decide what comes next.

The goal is not to do everything at once. The goal is to make one part of the learning more intentional, more coherent, and more useful for the student.

As you build confidence, you can apply the same way of thinking to additional students, learning priorities, and contexts.

Start small—but keep the decisions connected.

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Today was your first look. You can go deeper.

This webinar introduces the larger 21st Century ECC approach. It is not the last word on assessment, individualized curriculum, multipathway delivery, or evidence—it is your first opportunity to see how the pieces fit together.

Future in-depth professional learning can explore:

- recognizing meaningful ECC learning with the collapsed framework, assessment, everyday learning, impact, and momentum
- designing an individualized ECC curriculum using backward design, learning targets, and instructional snapshots
- creating ECC Delivery Frameworks and multipathway plans across learner profiles, teams, and settings
- documenting meaningful progress, agency, independence, sustainability, and transfer

Interested in an in-depth class or series? Use the Google Form linked with the companion workbook to request future professional learning and tell me which topics would be most useful to you.

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Keep the Learning Going

Request Your Delivering the Expanded Core with Purpose Companion Workbook

The webinar introduces the four connected moves. The companion workbook helps you apply them to one learner and one meaningful ECC priority.

Use the workbook as a flexible workalong to help you:

- Notice meaningful ECC learning using the collapsed framework
- Choose and clarify a purposeful starting priority and what successful learning could look like
- Create an ECC instructional snapshot that makes the intended learning visible
- Design delivery with purpose using the multipathway approach
- Document evidence of learning, progress, transfer, sustainability, and adaptability
- Decide what comes next without turning ECC into more activities or more paperwork

You do not need to implement everything at once. Start with one learner and one meaningful priority—but keep the learning decisions connected.

Complete the request form to receive an instant download of the fillable PDF companion workbook.

Request link: <https://forms.gle/ibmB5ZdXuLTttqDSA>

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Keep in touch with me

Let's make some ECC magic together!

On social media @9MoreThanCore

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At my website: www.ExpandedCoreSolutions.com

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