Tips for Completing this Tool:
Basing Part of Grade on Effort

1. If the student is in an inclusive classroom, the general and special educators should collaborate to complete the tool. If feasible, the student and parent should also be involved. A grading adaptation involving effort will be more effective if the student has been involved in design of the adaptation.

2. The team must determine whether the purpose of the adaptation is to acknowledge the student’s current level of effort by incorporating it into the grading system, or if the purpose is to increase the student’s effort. For students who work very hard but make slow progress on the curriculum, giving “credit” for effort in the form of points or an extra grade may seem fair, but may not meet the criteria of increasing access to and performance on the general curriculum. Teams facing this scenario of slow progress should consider alternative adaptations such as prioritization of content and related or assignment, process use, or progress on IEP goals.

3. Unfortunately, no precise formula exists for determining how much effort should count toward a student’s grade on an assignment or report card. In the author’s experience, effort seldom constitutes more than 5% of the overall points or percentages for an assignment. A common strategy is to award “bonus points” for effort that can be used to bolster lower scores on specific assignments.

4. When specifying behaviors that will represent effort, the team should make sure to select behaviors that are associated with participation in the classroom assignments, and not those that reflect “cooperation” or adherence to the classroom management system. Although positive classroom behavior is desirable, it should not be addressed through the grading system. Thus, behaviors such as paying attention or remaining in seat should not be included in the grading system.