Creating Inclusive Schools
FOR ALL STUDENTS

An education for children with disabilities that, as one principal puts it, offers 'nothing separate, no special spaces, no special teachers'

BY JULIE CAUSTON-THEOHARIS
AND GEORGE THEOHARIS

How do we create an inclusive school for all students? How do we establish an authentic sense of belonging? What is improving learning all about?

Here's how George Theoharis, former principal at Falk Elementary School in Madison, Wis., described his school's shift as it sought to answer the above questions.

"It was all about Celia. She went from spending all day in a self-contained room for kindergarten to spending her whole day with her [general education] 1st-grade class. She went from looking sad and limp in her wheelchair to looking animated and participating in everything that was going on.

"It was all about Jamal. Last year, he had to be escorted out of the school by the police. He spent 2nd grade isolated because of 'violent behavior issues.' Now he spends all day,

every day, in the classroom without significant behavioral incidents and he passed the 3rd-grade state test.

"It was also all about Maria. Initially, she was removed from her class for ESL instruction. Her teacher said she was reserved, had difficulty transitioning and was always behind in completing work. Now she spends her entire day in the 5th-grade classroom; she is a vocal member in class, proficient on the 5th-grade state test, and was a runner-up in the school spelling bee."

Nothing Special

Nationwide, schools and districts from Concord, N.H., to Whittier, Calif., and from Cambridge, Mass., to Charlotte, N.C., are undertaking inclusive school reform with positive results. Schools become inclusive for various reasons — the legislative mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, pressures to meet adequate yearly progress, advocacy from families and the vision of school leaders. We see inclusion and belonging as essential conditions for educating each child.

At Falk Elementary, implementing an inclusive philosophy meant no self-contained special education classrooms, no resource room pullout programs, no kids sent to other schools. The principal's commitment to eliminating pullout programs and separate instruction was simply: "Nothing separate, no special spaces, no special teachers."

Theoharis added, "All kids, and I mean *all* kids — kids with significant disabilities, kids with autism, kids with serious behavior issues, kids with learning disabilities, kids in wheelchairs, kids who were high flyers, kids who

were learning English — each and every child needed to be an essential member of the classroom and school community."

General education teachers and specialists (special education, English as a second language, reading, etc.) had to co-plan and co-teach. The same staff was used, just arranged differently, meaning no additional funds were used. This deeply held commitment to inclusion permeated all aspects of the school — after-school programs, reading interventions, the physical arrangement of classrooms and dramatic changes on the playground.

"This was not a program," Theoharis said. "This was a way to understand and view everything in our school. It wasn't easy; it was a constant struggle and we were never perfect, not at all … but we have seen serious achievement gains as a result of these changes."

He admits his school was not utopia. None of the other school systems mentioned above have perfect schools or perfect inclusion, but they do share a common mission — to educate students together. Because of this commitment, the Falk school realized substantial achievement gains by bringing students with disabilities and others who commonly receive intervention services to the center of the discussion about school reform and to the center of the general education classroom.

Nonetheless, critiques of inclusion are common. We hear tales of unsupported classroom teachers or students floundering in mainstream education. Some will claim, "We tried it and it didn't work." These are not critiques about inclusion at all. They are instead critiques of poor mainstreaming, of partial efforts at bringing students into the general education classroom and leaving the school's structures, norms and policies unchanged.

Having inclusion classrooms or inclusive students does mean some students on the surface are included, but as a whole the school is not truly inclusive. An overloaded classroom with high numbers of students with disabilities densely "clustered" with other students is not inclusion. These arrangements create special education islands within general education classrooms and are difficult to manage.

District policies and procedures in Madison, Wis., led by Jack Jorgensen, director of student services, paved the way in many regards for moving beyond these out-

dated notions of "inclusive" classrooms toward creating genuinely inclusive schools and an increasingly inclusive school district. In Madison, district policy states that all students should attend the schools they would attend regardless of disability, all students should be placed in general education classrooms with attention to natural proportions and special education teachers are no longer slotted to teach students with a particular disability label, but all special education teachers serve students across the entire range of disabilities.

A Way of Thinking

Inclusion is built on the premise that all students should be valued for their unique abilities and included as essential members of a school community. Inclusion is not a place; it is a way of thinking. Moving some students from

special education settings to general education settings is merely a first step to ensuring supported and successful inclusion for all.

Norman Kunc, a contributor to the 1992 book *Restructuring for Caring & Effective Education*, defines inclusion as the valuing of diversity within the human community: "When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become 'normal' in order to contribute to the world. …We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging."

Inclusive schools are places where students, regardless of ability, race, language and income, are integral members of classrooms, feel a connection to their peers, have access to rigorous and meaningful general education curricula and receive collaborative support to succeed. In inclusive schools, students do not have to leave to learn. Rather, services and supports are brought directly to them. A compelling body of research documents that students with and without disabilities, as well as students who are learning English, benefit both socially and academically from inclusive services.

Federal law ensures "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities … are educated with children who are not disabled" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Further, federal courts routinely support inclusive over segregated placements and establish the notion that special education services are portable. A relatively early court case (*Roncker v. Walter*, 1983) determined, "The court should determine whether the services … could be

The Only Way To Fly, Inclusively

BY CARL D. ROBERTS AND CAROLYN TEIGLAND

"Our vision is to successfully include 100 percent of special education students in the regular education setting to the fullest extent possible."

Five years ago, the Cecil County Public Schools in Maryland embarked on an aggressive schedule to fully include all students with special needs in the regular education setting to be consistent with the most recent interpretation of "least restrictive environment."

At the time, 59 percent of special education students were receiving their instruction in the regular education setting. By last December, 89 percent of students with individual education plans were fully participating in the regular classroom, being fully exposed with proper accommodations to the regular education curriculum. Translating percentages into numbers of students, 1,722 of Cecil County's 1,931 special education students were included in the regular education classroom during the past school year.

Not only have we fully included the vast majority of our special-needs population, but we also have reduced the number of students identified as being eligible for special education.

This has not been an easy journey, and by no means are we done. In the fifth year of the plan, our five high schools are in the early stages of full inclusion as special-needs students matriculate to the 9th grade, having experienced inclusion during their elementary and/or middle school years.

Our vision is to successfully include 100 percent of special education students in the regular education setting to the fullest extent possible. All students will receive the services they require in their neighborhood school, allowing them to attend school with their age-appropriate peers.

Free Advice

We've learned several lessons about what it takes from a system leadership perspective to make inclusion happen.

▶ **NO. 1: PROVIDE STRONG LEADERSHIP.** The board of education, superintendent and top leadership throughout the school system must be the leading advocates for inclusive education. The energy and resources required must be guaranteed or the initiative will fail.

The doubters within and outside the school system look to the leadership to determine how committed they are. *There can be no weak link.* Both central-office administrators and principals must share the vision for inclusive education.

▶ **NO. 2: DISPEL THE MYTHS CONCERNING RESOURCES EARLY ON.** Including special-needs students in regular classrooms is not inexpensive. The Cecil County budget for special education was $12.7 million in FY '02 and will be $21.7 million in FY '09. Economy-to-scale cost-saving strategies do not work in an inclusive education setting.

▶ **NO. 3: ENSURE TRAINING, TRAINING AND MORE TRAINING.** The biggest fear that regular education teachers have is that they do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to work with special education students. The biggest fear special educators have is that they do not have the knowledge or skills to be successful in the regular education classroom.

We trained our regular educators but forgot in the early years about the change for our special educators. Training must be ongoing and individualized for the unique needs of the students and classrooms in question.

▶ **NO. 4: RECOGNIZE THAT PASSIONS RUN HIGH.** Community advocates and parents of special needs students are feverishly passionate about the rights and needs of their children.

Parents will be concerned about a new program, especially if they believe that somehow their children are going to receive less attention than before. Include them in the planning and training early on in the process. Effective communication with this powerful and influential constituency must be ongoing and two-way.

feasibly provided in a nonsegregated setting (i.e., regular class). If they can, the placement in the segregated school would be inappropriate under the act (IDEA)." Individual court cases and class action lawsuits further determine the legal presumption of placement in a general education class with peers without disabilities.

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No Exceptions

When thinking about inclusion, people often ask, "What about Jamie?" They immediately think of the student whom they believe to be the exception, someone who cannot be included because of the significance of his or her academic, or more often behavioral, needs. But we mean Jamie, too.

We must thoughtfully consider the classroom teacher and what supports will be needed for success in the general education setting. For example, Jamie might need sensory supports in the classroom, a communication system in place, a modified curriculum and/or peer supports. Although a continuum of placements may need to be made available, more restrictive placements often are made as a lasting decision and students are permanently excluded.

Instead, we see every child as a permanent member of a general education classroom and a more restrictive

▶ **NO. 5: GET EXPERTISE IF YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE IT!** The Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education has been a partner with our school district since 2002. We are fortunate that the Maryland State Department of Education funds the involvement of these dedicated professionals. The knowledge, skill and commitment this organization brings to the school district's central administration and school-based personnel are critical factors in the success of our inclusion efforts.

A Narrowing Gap

We believed at the beginning of this initiative that including students with special needs in the regular education setting was the right thing to do. It made sense that exposing students with disabilities to the essential curriculum and to peers without special needs would offer excellent role models and higher performance on class, county and state assessments.

Our special education subgroup is improving and closing the learning gap when compared with the non-special education student population. Students who previously performed significantly below grade level are now reading and working at or just below grade level. However, we still have a performance gap that becomes more difficult as students enter middle and high school.

What we knew but didn't realize was the extent of the positive benefit in the social realm for both disabled and nondisabled students. We have cases of previously nonverbal children who can now express themselves orally and through writing. Students who did not smile or show emotions now brighten up each day

when they enter the classroom and see their friends. Regular education students welcome special needs students as their classmates and as their friends.

Our children are experiencing learning in a diverse setting that is free of discrimination. While we knew it would improve the lives of special needs children, the change has been truly inspiring.

Social Gains

Sherri Isaacs, an elementary school teacher, shares this description of an autistic child who was included in her 3rd-grade classroom: "Blake came to us fairly nonverbal. The only thing he would do is repeat what others said to him, and he had a very limited sight vocabulary. Now he responds to greetings from others and has significantly increased the number of sight words he recognizes. With proper accommodations, he is being exposed to the grade-level curricula and materials."

The greatest growth, Isaacs adds, has been in Blake's social behaviors: "He can now sit and participate with other students. The other students respond to him well and look after him."

Sharon Boyd, who has a son with autism in our schools, has witnessed a marked difference between a self-contained classroom and an inclusion classroom. Exposure to proper behavior of same-age peers has had a tremendous positive impact on Jared.

"I was totally against inclusion at the beginning, but the staff at Jared's elementary school is totally awesome," Boyd says. "The screaming and physical gyrations have ceased and Jared is now dealing with grade-level content. I give the teachers all the credit. The school system

Carl Roberts and Carolyn Teigland

promised and the teachers have ensured that all the proper supports for Jared are in place. He now speaks to me in full sentences. I believe the modeling from the other children has been a real positive. They have taken Jared under their wing."

There are so many champions of inclusive education in Cecil County that we cannot name them all. Past and current leadership, teachers and paraprofessionals, parents and students, the Maryland Coalition of Inclusive Education and the state department of education have all played key roles.

It's the right thing to do for children. All children deserve access to the regular education program. It is not easy and it is not for the half-hearted. But if you truly love children, it is the only way to fly.

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"Moving all students into general education is the first step toward inclusion. The next step is helping them *feel* they belong."

Julie Causton-Theoharis facilitates a planning session on creating more inclusive schools in Syracuse, N.Y.

and deliver instruction to the full range of learners. All learners are placed into general education classrooms in natural proportions — students with special education needs are not concentrated in certain classrooms.

A Human Response

Moving all students into general education is the first step toward inclusion. The next step is helping them *feel* they belong. Humans need to have a sense of belonging. People who feel they do not belong often shut down, become quiet, get angry or become unavailable for learning.

As educators, we understand this human response to belonging, yet schools often create separate spaces and systems that all but ensure students will feel disconnected. For example, classrooms are set aside specifically for students with labels such as autism, learning disabilities or behavior challenges. Time-out spaces are demarcated, and separate programs are created for students learning functional skills. These separate spaces are created with little thought to how it might feel to attend a class for others with behavior problems or to be denied access to general education. Small wonder that students with disabilities who are in segregated settings continue to have the lowest performance rates and among the highest dropout rates.

Conversely, when people feel a sense of belonging they are more motivated, engaged, attentive, participatory and more likely to take risks and learn. Research establishes a strong connection between belonging and how well students feel and perform in school.

At Falk Elementary School, the staff used the community-building program called Tribes. All teachers received training and built community purposefully each day through morning meetings, positive behavior management systems, appreciations and group problem solving. A sense of belonging pervaded the very fabric of the school, encompassing scheduling, community-building activities, the playground, relations among students, school climate and staff organization.

All Achieving

Given the current push for academic accountability, we must consider whether implementing inclusion will improve achievement. Theoharis, principal of the 500-student school, documented how student learning improved after policies, procedures, curricula and instruction were shifted to support all learners. On the state reading test, Falk went from testing 78 percent of its students to testing 98 percent.

setting is used only if and when a student needs short-term support (i.e., a temporary crisis, or medical need). Further, this setting is available to any student who needs temporary extra support, not only those with disabilities. At Falk Elementary School and others, even students with the most significant disabilities, who would often be placed in self-contained classrooms and schools elsewhere, are flourishing in general education settings.

Salem Hyde Elementary School, in the Syracuse, N.Y., City School District, made the shift toward a schoolwide philosophy of inclusion. Salem Hyde previously concentrated or overloaded intense needs of students with disabilities into certain classrooms. These rooms were called inclusive classrooms. Other classrooms still had a range of learner needs but lacked special education support. Many students across the school were removed from their classrooms for portions of the day to receive pullout special education services. Additionally, there were two self-contained special education rooms where multi-aged students with disabilities spent their entire day removed from their general education peers and curriculum.

Many school districts today offer a similar model of service delivery among schools that attempt to do inclusion without initiating the needed deep and systemic change to fully embrace an inclusive philosophy.

After restructuring service delivery, Salem Hyde no longer operates resource rooms or self-contained classrooms. All special education teachers are paired with two general education classrooms and a teaching assistant to jointly plan

Five Keys to Co-Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms

BY WENDY W. MURAWSKI

One of the primary ways schools are addressing the need for accountability and individualization is through a technique known as co-teaching.

Co-teaching is considered a viable option for ensuring students have a "highly qualified" content teacher in the room, while also ensuring that all students' individualized education needs are met by an instructor who is highly qualified in differentiation strategies. Provided here are the five keys any administrator should know to create and maintain effective co-teaching in the inclusive classroom.

▶ **KNOW WHAT CO-TEACHING IS AND WHEN IT IS NEEDED.** Co-teaching exists when two professionals co-plan, co-instruct and co-assess a diverse group of students. Both teachers provide substantive instruction to all students on a daily, consistent basis. Neither is considered the main teacher of the class; they are equals.

In most schools, however, there are not enough special education teachers to enable all classes to be co-taught. Special educators often are spread thin and cannot afford to be in one class daily for a committed period of time. In that case, in-class support may be warranted.

In-class support varies from co-teaching in that the co-planning and co-assessing components are absent, or at least are not as prevalent as they are during co-teaching. During in-class support, the role of the special education teacher is to provide on-the-spot accommodations, behavioral supports and proximity control. Naturally, those techniques do not carry as much impact as co-teaching because teachers are reactive, rather than pro-active.

▶ **RECOGNIZE THAT CO-TEACHING IS A MARRIAGE AND YOU ARE THE MATCHMAKER.** Co-teaching is often referred to as a "professional marriage." As such, administrators who do not want their teachers to get divorced quickly need to recognize the importance of encouraging self-selection of partners.

Although obtaining volunteers for co-teaching is not always feasible, there are strategies that can increase the chances educators will step forward to participate. These include: (a) sending out a survey of teacher preferences (grade, subject, people with whom they wish to collaborate); (b) allowing teachers to choose their partners; (c) providing professional development; (d) assuring common planning times; and (e) allowing new co-teaching partners to be recused from other responsibilities (e.g., lunch duty). Being a good matchmaker now will ensure you don't have to spend excessive time later as a marriage counselor.

▶ **MAKE SCHEDULING A PRIORITY.** Allowing computers to randomly populate classes for the master schedule is not the best approach to take when first establishing co-teaching at a school. In fact, students with disabilities should be put into the master schedule first (in some cases, this means hand scheduling). One administrator in Alabama reported she simply had to get rid of everyone's "sacred cows" and start fresh. They ended up recreating the schedule from six periods to eight in order to keep subjects, offer electives and ensure teachers had both team planning as well as individual planning times.

"Co-teaching is often referred to as a 'professional marriage.'"

Another aspect of scheduling relates to the proportion of students with special needs to the typical learners in the class. While no magic number exists, experts recommend having natural proportions of students with disabilities in classes. The key: Avoid having more than 30 percent of the class with special needs. Though it may be convenient to cluster more students with disabilities into one class, the desired benefits can be negated by this action, leading to lower academics, decreased behaviors and increased teacher frustration.

▶ **PLANNING IS CRITICAL.** For the scheduling of common planning times to be accomplished, administrators and teachers must decide early on who will be co-teaching with whom. While this should be ideally determined based on individual student need, schools are usually able to detect a trend in which classes typically have the most students with significant needs (e.g., English or math classes). Insightful administrators will find a way to give prospective co-teachers time before the end of the school year and

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during the summer to meet and begin to pro-actively plan their instruction.

While common planning times are the most immediate way to ensure co-teachers plan consistently, other options include: (a) hiring a substitute, (b) using times when students are engaged elsewhere, (c) administrative or teacher coverage, (d) providing stipends and (e) banking instructional minutes so teachers can have additional planning time. Administrators also can purchase products that save time in co-planning, such as Lisa Dieker's *Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Book* (available from *www.cec. sped.org*) or *Co-Teaching Solutions Systems: Co-Teachers' Toolbox* (available from *www. coteachsolutions.com*).

▶ **MONITOR SUCCESS, GIVE FEEDBACK AND ENSURE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE.** In order to effectively assess the impact of co-teaching, administrators need to monitor co-instruction and provide feedback. Not all observations of co-teachers should be evaluative in nature. Identifying mentors, peer observers and co-teaching coordinators is helpful. Administrators need to reinforce that both teachers are equally responsible for the co-taught class and must therefore be present and consistently engaged.

An excellent reference is the 2005 article "This Doesn't Look Familiar: A Supervisor's Guide for Observing Co-Teachers" by Gloria Lodato Wilson in *Intervention in School and Clinic* (Vol. 40, No. 5). An excellent software program for observing co-teachers, collecting data on their progress and generating numerous comparative reports is the Co-Teaching Solutions System Observation System.

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Even with testing almost every student (including students with disabilities and English language learners), the percentage of students achieving at proficient or advanced levels rose from 50 percent before their restructuring to 86 percent three years later. The Falk school saw significant gains in reading among all subgroups: African-American students improved from 33 percent achieving proficient or advanced to 78 percent; Asian students, 47 percent to 100 percent; Hispanic students, 18 percent to 100 percent; students in special education, 13 percent to 60 percent; ELL students, 17 percent to 100 percent; and students receiving free/reduced-price lunch, 40 percent to 78 percent.

Yet many schools and districts do not make adequate yearly progress because they fail to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Teaching the same curriculum in the same way has not worked. Likewise, grouping students by ability under the guise of individualized instruction has not worked.

Inclusion in general education and attention to

> "Schools must transcend the myth that special educators have 'magic dust' that enables them to work effectively with students with disabilities."

belonging are the first steps toward greater achievement for all students. But this must be followed by improving the core teaching and curriculum to enhance learning of all students through differentiation, and teaching to multiple modalities and learning preferences.

For these changes to occur, teachers must release some of their traditional roles. This means that general educators must understand that the curriculum is not theirs alone to dictate. Similarly, special educators must abandon the feeling that "these students won't make it without me." Both groups of teachers require shared knowledge

But We Already Do Inclusion, Don't We?

Many administrators and teachers believe they already are doing inclusion. However, if you look closely at the national statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, more than one million students are denied access to the general education curriculum and instruction, and many more have access in name only.

We believe school leaders can examine current practices in their own district to gauge how inclusive the schools *actually* are.

The list of indicators below, while not exhaustive, is a place to begin critically reflecting on prevailing practices. We hope these statements provide a vehicle for discussion with administrators, teachers and staff.

As you read each statement below, ask yourself whether it reflects the schools in your district.

District Policies and Priorities

▸ The district vision and priorities focus on inclusive education for every student.

▸ General and special education administrators are committed to inclusive services for all students and see this as their responsibility.

▸ General education and special education funds and resources are merged to build staff and system capacity.

▸ Professional development on establishing/maintaining inclusive services, including collaborating with adults, is provided for all school personnel.

District Placement Systems

▸ No students are sent to schools or programs outside of the district and there are no schools *within* the district set aside for students with disabilities.

▸ All students attend the chronologically age-appropriate schools and classrooms they would attend regardless of ability/disability or native language.

▸ Percentages of students with disabilities in individual classrooms represent natural proportions within the school building.

School Vision and Climate

▸ The principal and staff articulate a vision and commitment to inclusive services for every child.

▸ The principal is knowledgeable about special education service delivery.

▸ The principal and staff articulate a schoolwide commitment to community building, establishing a climate of belonging and valuing human diversity.

Staff Collaboration

▸ All teachers (general and special education) are assigned to grade-level or content-area teams.

▸ Special education teachers support two or three inclusive sections or teachers.

▸ All special education services are provided seamlessly within the general classroom setting, typically through co-teaching.

▸ Related services are provided primarily through consultation with the general education teacher and through seamless support in the classroom.

▸ Time is provided for teams of teachers and paraprofessionals to plan together.

Inclusive Classroom Environments

▸ All students receive academic instruction in the general education setting.

▸ No rooms or spaces in the school are reserved for the use of students with disabilities.

▸ Teachers use ongoing and purposeful community building throughout the year.

▸ Teachers do not use phrases like "my students" and "Beth's kids," but instead refer to *all students* as "ours," indicating a belief that

and skills about students and the curriculum, as well as time to collaborate.

Schools must transcend the myth that special educators have "magic dust" that enables them to work effectively with students with disabilities. Both general and special education teachers must adopt new roles and participate in common professional development. When adopting a new math curriculum, for example, both groups should experience the same training. These new roles require general and special educators to co-plan and co-teach the curriculum.

Committed Leadership

To create more inclusive schools, school leaders are the most critical factor. First, leadership is always key to meaningful and lasting reform. To become an inclusive district, the superintendent and administrative team must articulate a vision and a commitment to the philosophy and practice of inclusive education for all.

Students with the most significant disabilities must be moved to the center of the conversation and to the center of the general education classroom. One place to start is
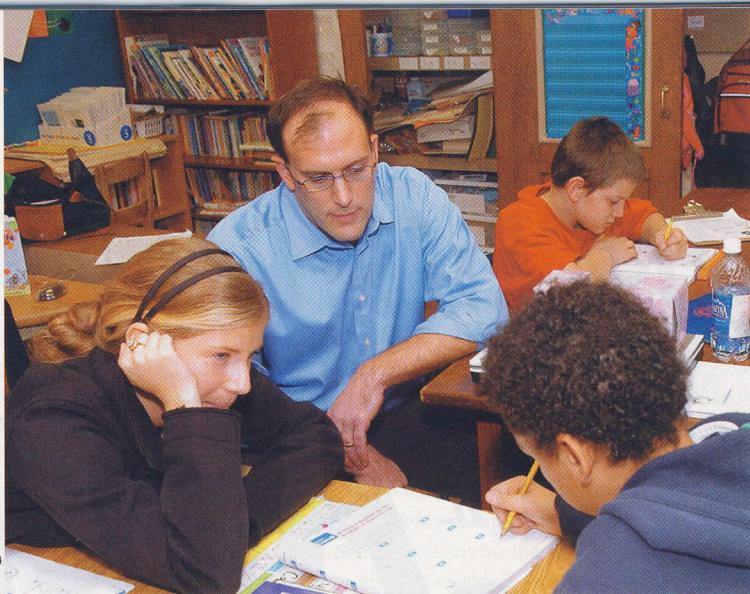

George Theoharis works with teachers and students at Salem Hyde Elementary School in Syracuse, N.Y.

by engaging in open, honest and reflective conversations about the current state of inclusion (see related story, page 30). Another essential step is to develop an inclusive student placement process.

Second, general class membership cannot be an option afforded only to those who are deemed "ready" or "well-behaved." Instead, inclusive schools are committed to the idea that student membership is not contingent upon readiness or behavior, but instead membership is a given and fully supported so all students will be prepared to participate in an inclusive society.

Third, if you build it, they will come. School leaders must stop funding and creating separate spaces for students — time-out rooms or alternative programs because once created these spaces will be used to separate students who are seen as different — with a disproportional negative impact on students from marginalized groups. These resources should instead be put into building strong general education classrooms, where teacher capacity is high and support is seamlessly provided to any student who needs it.

Finally, school leaders must provide explicit training to teachers and staff to build their capacity to support all kids in inclusive settings, to differentiate instruction and to collaborate. They then must provide leadership and support when difficulties arise.

These efforts are challenging, but any school reform effort worth doing is difficult. Support must be provided at every turn, so students like Celia, Jamal, Maria and Jamie have full access to the general education curriculum to reach their full academic and social potential. We cannot be satisfied with schools that work for only some. Ultimately, creating schools for all means including all students, developing an authentic sense of belonging for all students and creating general education settings that maximize learning for all students. ■

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all teachers are responsible for all kids.

▶ *Students with disabilities are dispersed throughout the classroom naturally, not clustered together.*

▶ *No student (including those with significant disabilities) engages in pullout or alternative activities to the extent that disruptions in the daily schedule and peer interactions occur.*

Curricular Considerations

▶ *Lessons are designed to address different modalities and the curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of all students.*

▶ *All students work toward the same standards-based outcomes.*

▶ *All students receive access to appropriate technology, communication supports and accommodations to meet their unique needs.*

▶ *Students with disabilities are actively participating in the same classroom activities as their peers, rather than simply observing or regularly engaging in alternative or separate tasks.*

—Julie Causton-Theoharis, George Theoharis and Christine Ashby