

This article was downloaded by: [Syracuse University Library]

On: 11 April 2014, At: 09:14

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Theory Into Practice

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/htip20>

Leading Inclusive Reform for Students With Disabilities: A School- and Systemwide Approach

George Theoharis^{ab} & Julie Causton^b

^a Associate Dean in the School of Education, Syracuse University

^b Department of Teaching and Leadership, Syracuse University

Published online: 04 Apr 2014.

To cite this article: George Theoharis & Julie Causton (2014) Leading Inclusive Reform for Students With Disabilities: A School- and Systemwide Approach, Theory Into Practice, 53:2, 82-97, DOI: [10.1080/00405841.2014.885808](https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2014.885808)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2014.885808>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

George Theoharis
Julie Causton

Leading Inclusive Reform for Students With Disabilities: A School- and Systemwide Approach

It is of great importance to maximize access to general education for all students with disabilities. This article focuses on how leaders create inclusive schools for all students—inclusive school reform. Inclusive school reform can result in all students with disabilities being placed into general education settings (including students with significant disabilities, students with mild disabilities, students with emotional disabilities, students with autism . . . all students) and provid-

ing inclusive services to meet their needs while eliminating pullout or self-contained special education programs. In this article, we outline a 7-part process, as well as a set of tools for schools to use to create authentically inclusive schools.

George Theoharis, Ph.D. is an Associate Dean in the School of Education, Chair and associate professor in the Department of Teaching and Leadership at Syracuse University and Julie Causton, Ph.D. is an associate professor, Department of Teaching and Leadership in the School of Education at Syracuse University.

Correspondence should be addressed to George Theoharis, Associate Professor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education, Syracuse University, 153 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, New York, NY 13244. E-mail: gtheoahar@syr.edu.

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/htip.

SCHOOL LEADERS ARE instrumental figures in creating and carrying out a vision for inclusive schools. Each year since 1974, when students with disabilities were guaranteed the right to a free and appropriate public education, more students with disabilities have been, and are continuing to be, educated in general education schools and classrooms. Inclusion has evolved over time and, increasingly, schools are giving students with disabilities access to rich academic instruction, connection to their peers, and full membership in their schools and communities. This, in conjunction with the new era of standards where schools and districts are being held increasingly accountable for the achievement of students with disabilities, has created the need

to focus on inclusive leadership with regard to special education.

In this era of standards and accountability, a key aspect in thinking about the achievement of students with disabilities is the idea of access—access to general education curriculum (which directly relates to the content of standardized tests), access to high quality instruction, and access to peers (the social and emotional aspects of schooling). Since students with disabilities gained the right to public education, scholars have developed a compelling body of literature documenting the impact of inclusive services for students with disabilities (see Peterson & Hittie, 2003, for a listing of many of these studies). Most recently, Cosier (2010) examined a national database and found that for every additional hour students with disabilities spend in general education, there is a significant gain of achievement across all disabilities categories. Thus, it is of great importance to maximize all students with disabilities access to general education. For the purposes of this article, we define *inclusion* as students with disabilities being educated in the general education classroom and having full access to the general education curriculum, instruction, and peers with needed supports. This article focuses on how leaders create inclusive schools for all students—inclusive school reform.

To do this, we rely on the literature examining the role that leaders play in creating inclusive schools for students with disabilities (see Capper & Frattura, 2008; Capper, Frattura & Keyes, 2000; McLesky & Waldron, 2002; Reihl, 2000; Theoharis, 2009). In looking across this work, a number of key ideas emerge that inform moving from this literature to the practice of leading schools to be inclusive. School leaders successful at creating inclusive schools take on a variety of strategies in this work. These include (a) setting a vision, (b) developing democratic implementation plans, (c) using staff members (teachers and paraprofessionals) in systematic ways to create inclusive service delivery, (d) creating and developing teams who work collaboratively to meet the range of student needs, (e) providing ongoing learning opportunities for staff members, (f) monitoring and adjusting the service

delivery each year, and (g) purposefully working to develop a climate of belonging for students and staff members. The framework for inclusive reform presented in this article is built upon this foundational literature.

Inclusive School Reform

Inclusive school reform has resulted in all students with disabilities being placed into general education settings (including students with significant disabilities, students with mild disabilities, students with emotional disabilities, students with autism . . . all students) and providing inclusive services to meet their needs while eliminating pullout or self-contained special education programs. We outline a 7-part process. This process is adapted from the Planning Alternate Tomorrows with Hope planning process (Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 1993). See Figure 1 for the Inclusive Reform Planning Tool. It is important that the steps outlined in the inclusive reform process are carried out in a democratic and transparent manner and that this engages the entire staff and school community. To make the nuts and bolts of this work more efficiently, we recommend that a representative leadership team consisting of school administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and other staff members go through this process together. However, it is important for this team to check in and involve the entire staff throughout the process and to develop a communication plan for keeping families engaged in this process.

Step 1—Setting a Vision

First, the team sets a vision for the school reform initiative (number 1 on Inclusive School Reform Planning tool) around three areas: (a) school structure—how one arranges adults and students, (b) meeting the needs of all in general education, and (c) school climate. Many schools have gone through this process already. The following is an example of goals that a K–8 school created during the inclusive school reform work. They include:

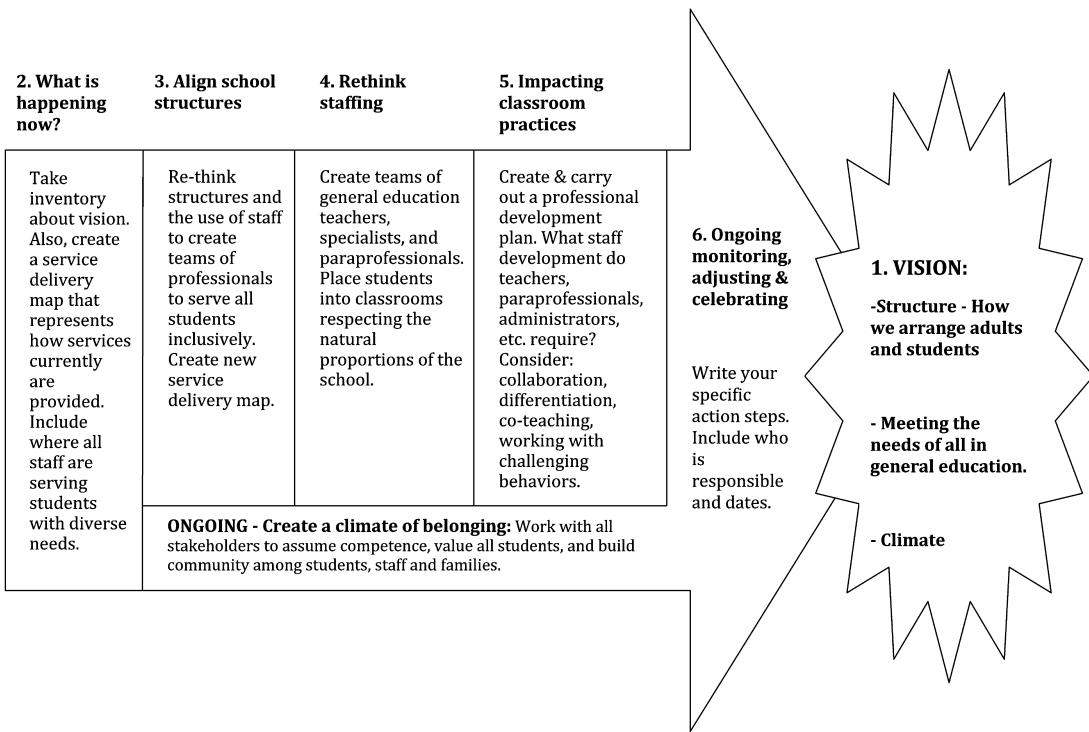


Figure 1. Inclusive School Reform Planning Tool. *Note.* This figure references Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest (1993).

Structure Goals (How one arranges adults and students)

- Place students in balanced classrooms with positive role models.
- Designate person to facilitate efficient monthly communication meetings for staff members to discuss various topics surrounding inclusion.

School Climate Goals

- Examine the physical structure to determine locations conducive to planning, supporting, and implementing inclusion at each grade level.
- Create a schedule that promotes consistent and common planning time for ongoing communication and dialogue.
- Develop and implement approaches and procedures that promote a professional learning

community (collaboration, consensus, agree to disagree respectfully).

- Purposefully build classroom and school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff and fosters active/engaging learning.

Meeting the Needs of all in the General Education Classroom Goals

- Have planned opportunities for vertical communication to provide continuity between grade levels.
- Provide child-centered, differentiated, research based instruction that challenges children of all abilities, supported by targeted staff development.

Step 2—What is Happening Now? Creating Service Delivery Maps

Second, teams examine the existing way services are provided, human resources are used,

Downloaded by [Syracuse University Library] at 09:14 11 April 2014

and other important data. This process requires school teams to map out their current service delivery and the way they use their human resources in efforts to meet the range of student needs. This involves creating a visual representation of the classrooms, special education service provision, general education classrooms, and how students receive their related services. An essential part of creating service maps is to indicate which staff members pull students from which classrooms, which students learn in self-contained spaces, which paraprofessionals are used where—a complete picture of how and where all staff at the school work.

Figure 2 provides an example of this kind of visual map of the service delivery model before inclusive school reform. The rectangles around the edge represent the general education classrooms. The ovals in the middle, labeled *resource*, represent resource special education teachers who worked with students with disabilities in many classrooms (as indicated by the lines) through a pullout model. The circles labeled *self-contained* had a multiaged group of students with disabilities who spent the entire day together, separate from general education peers. There is one oval marked with *inclusion 20+8*. This represents what was previously called an *inclusive* classroom. This room had about 20 general education students with an additional 8 students with disabilities. This old service delivery plan concentrated or overloaded intense needs into certain classrooms and other classrooms lacked both students with disabilities and additional adult support. As this shows, in this old model some students were excluded and removed from the general education curriculum, instruction, and social interaction with general education peers for some or all of each school day.

Step 3—Align School Structures

This step involves rethinking structures and the use of staff members to create teams of professionals to serve all students inclusively, in other words, creating a new service delivery map. After creating a map of the current service

delivery, the staff looks to create a new inclusive service delivery plan by redeploying staff members to make balanced and heterogeneous classrooms where all students are included, to enhance inclusion and belonging. Figure 3 provides an example of inclusive service delivery. Teachers and administrators reconfigured the current use of staff members to form teams of specialists and general education teachers to create inclusive teams that collaboratively plan and deliver instruction to heterogeneous student groups. In this example, the school choose to pair special education teachers as part of inclusive teams with two to three general education classrooms and teachers.

Step 4—Rethink Staffing: Creating Instructional Teams

The fourth step in the process is to rethink the use of staff members. This involves creating teams of general education teachers, specialists (i.e., special education teachers, English-language learner [ELL] teachers, etc.), and paraprofessionals to serve all students inclusively. In the example in Figures 2 and 3, the special education teacher, who was formerly a teacher in the self-contained classroom (Figure 2), now is coteaching and coplanning with two general education teachers (Figure 3) and a paraprofessional. An essential component of this step is placing students into classrooms using the school's natural proportions of students with special education needs or other needs (like ELL) as a guide. This means that if 13% of the students at the school have disabilities, then the student placement process should mirror that density of students with special needs in each classroom, and not create classroom with high percentages of students with special needs. Part of creating classes, whether at the elementary, middle, or high school level, is to not overload or cluster many students with special education needs into one room or section. Using natural proportions as a guide, it is important to strive for balanced, heterogeneous classes that mix abilities, achievement, behavior, and other learning needs.

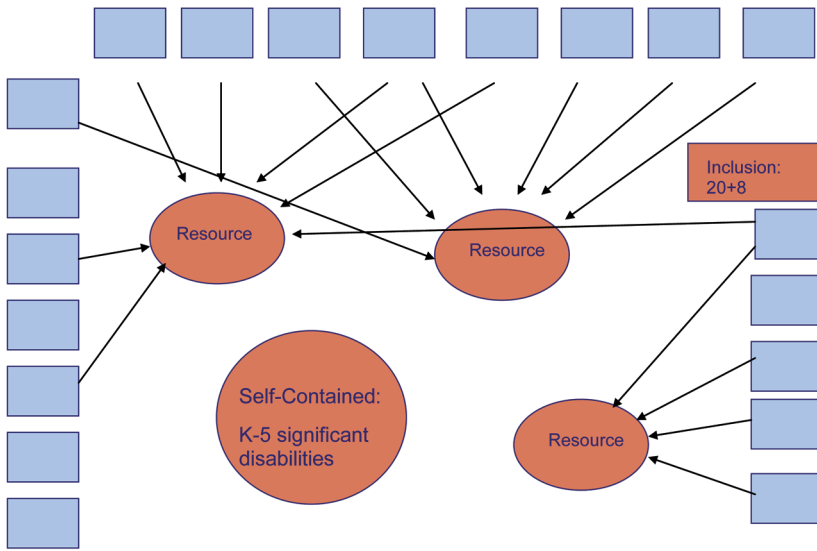


Figure 2. Special Education Service Delivery Prior to Inclusive Restructuring. *Note.* Rectangles = elementary general education classrooms K-5. Circles/ovals = special education teachers. Resource = special education teachers who pull students from their general education classroom. Inclusion 20+10 = a classroom where a general education teacher is team teaching with a special education teacher where there are 20 general education students and 10 special education students. Self-contained: K-5 significant disabilities = a special education classroom where all students who have significant disabilities receive their instruction and spend the majority of their school day.

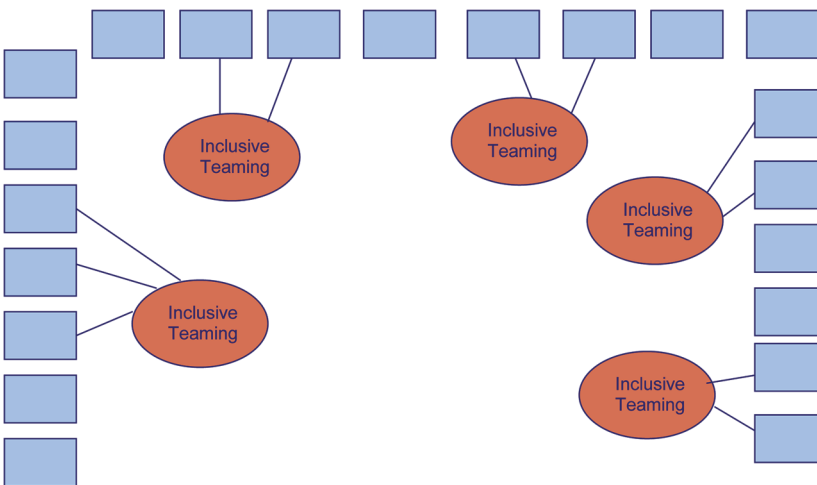


Figure 3. Inclusive Service Delivery—Post Reform. *Note.* Rectangles = elementary general education classrooms. Circles/ovals = special education teachers. Inclusive teaming = a special education teacher teaming with 2-3 regular education teachers to meet the range of student needs within the classroom. Each team has one paraprofessional assigned as well.

Step 5—Impacting Classroom Practices

Fifth, it is important to impact the daily classroom practices that these teaching teams will use. This involves creating and carrying out a professional development plan for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. We recommend that schools consider topics such as collaboration, coteaching, differentiated instruction, working with challenging behavior, inquiry-based instruction, ELL methods, literacy, etc. In our experience, all the schools that have become more inclusive through this process have spent significant professional development time and energy learning about collaboration, coteaching, and differentiation.

One important component of impacting classroom practices and the professional development required to do so involves schools leaders setting expectations and providing feedback to their staff. We have created a number of tools to assist school leaders with providing this feedback.

Figure 4, the coteaching feedback form, is a tool for observations and providing feedback to teams for when a special educator and a general educator are working together in one classroom. These teachers may work together in the same room for part or all of the day, but providing feedback about a number of components that are important for coteaching can help the team improve.

Figures 5 and 6 are additional feedback forms to be used during classroom walkthroughs and observations—focusing on classroom environment and behavior respectively. These tools provide a framework for leaders to use when in classrooms to address key components of good inclusive classrooms.

Step 6—Ongoing Monitoring, Adjusting, and Celebrating

The sixth component of the inclusive reform process is to monitor and adjust the plan with attention to getting feedback from all staff members, students, and families, but without abandoning the plan at the first moment of struggle or resistance. During the summer and into the first few weeks of the year, it is important to

iron out logistics and adjust teaching schedules as needed. Part of monitoring and adjusting means that the leadership team begins to plan for the following year midway through each school year. Additionally, this component involves making time to honor the hard work of school reform—specifically the new roles and responsibilities that teaching teams have had to adopt and celebrating successes along the way. Schools going through this process have done a variety of things to this end: mid-fall celebrations for staff members to keep momentum, banner-raising celebrations to declare a commitment to this effort while inviting local officials and the press, and end-of-the-year celebrations to end the year on a positive note.

Step 7—Ongoing: Create a Climate of Belonging

An ongoing part of inclusive reform needs to be creating a climate of belonging. A component of this necessitates involving all staff members in the planning and implementation of a more authentically inclusive school. Also, creating a climate of belonging means working with all stakeholders in the school to assume competence and to value all students, purposefully building community in each classroom throughout the year, adopting a school wide community building approach, and enhancing the sense of belonging for all students, staff members, and families. Figure 7 is a tool for school leaders to use during walk-throughs and observations to provide feedback to teams around issues of belonging.

It is important to note that the literature and our experience with this process suggest that all seven aspects of the model are needed. We recommend that school implement the new inclusive service delivery between steps 4 and 5 of the process.

Implications for Districts

The previously described steps describe how to create inclusive schooling at the school-building level; however, many district administrators inquire about how to create an entirely inclusive district. Some district administrators

Class:		Date:	Time:
Lesson/Content:		Co-Teachers:	
		1.	
		2.	
		Other adults present:	
Model:	Check One:	Describe the Co-Teaching Model Used:	
One Teach, One Observe*			
Parallel Teaching			
Station Teaching			
Alternative Teaching*			
Team Teaching			
One Teach, One Assist*	*Use sparingly and on occasion only		
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:
Leadership in Class	Both teachers take a lead role in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What is each teacher's role?
	Students relate to both teachers as leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What are students' attitudes re: teachers?
Accommodations & Modifications	Both teachers provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do teachers accommodate and modify instruction?
	Students work at appropriately accommodated & modified tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What specific accommodations and modifications are used by students?
Behavior Management	Both teachers share behavior management, and use positive behavior support strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How does each teacher support students to behave appropriately?

Figure 4. Coteaching Feedback Form.

follow the outlined process on a school-by-school basis; others undergo a large-scale approach. Figure 8 outlines some guidelines and helps to avoid

common pitfalls. See Figure 8 for a detailed account of the necessary guidelines when moving an entire district to become more inclusive.

	Students respond to either teacher's intervention with appropriate behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Describe student responses.
Access to All Students	Special educator and general educator work with all students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How does each teacher access all students?
	All students work with both teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do student work with both teachers?
Grouping	Teachers work mostly with heterogeneous groups, shifting homogeneous groups often, if used.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Describe flow of student groups.
	Student groups change often, and homogeneous grouping is used sparingly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Describe student grouping.
Active Learning Structures & Learning Styles	Teachers use active learning structures and multiple learning styles throughout the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What active learning structures and styles are taught?
	Students are actively engaged with multiple learning styles.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Describe student activity.

Comments:

Figure 4. (Continued).

Class:		Date:	Time:
Lesson/Content:		Teachers:	
		1.	
		2.	
		Other adults present:	
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:
Seating Arrangements	Students with disabilities are not all seated together.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Where are students with disabilities seated?
	Students are provided with choices in where they are seated.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	
	All students are equally spaced throughout the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What types of seating arrangements are used throughout the lesson?
Student Ownership	Student work and art is displayed throughout the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What do the walls of the classroom look like?
	Student-written rules, calendars, agendas, etc. are present in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	In what other ways is student pride evident in the classroom?
Organizing the Space	Quiet areas are available for students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Where are these located and what materials are in that space?
	The classroom space is divided up by learning activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What learning activities do students engage in throughout different parts of the room?

Figure 5. Classroom Environment Feedback.

Class:		Date:	Time:
Lesson/Content:		Teachers:	
		1.	
		2.	
		Other adults present:	
<hr/>			
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:
Communicative Nature of Behavior	Teachers make attempts to understand what behavior is communicating.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Do teachers ask students what they need?
	Students are provided with an efficient communication system.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	In what ways do students communicate in the classroom?
Classroom Removal	Teachers do not remove students from the classroom in response to behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do the teachers respond?
	Students are encouraged to work through their problems with peers or adults.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies do teachers employ to promote student independence?
Reinforcement	Teachers use reinforcements that are personally and socially valued and meaningful.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What reinforcements are used?
	Students have choice with their reinforcement.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do students respond to reinforcements?

Figure 6. Supporting Behavior Feedback Form.

Class:		Date:		Time:	
Lesson/Content:				Teachers:	
				1.	
				2.	
				Other adults present:	
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:		
Communicative Nature of Behavior	Teachers make attempts to understand what behavior is communicating.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Do teachers ask students what they need?		
	Students are provided with an efficient communication system.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	In what ways do students communicate in the classroom?		
Classroom Removal	Teachers do not remove students from the classroom in response to behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do the teachers respond?		
	Students are encouraged to work through their problems with peers or adults.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies do teachers employ to promote student independence?		
Reinforcement	Teachers use reinforcements that are personally and socially valued and meaningful.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What reinforcements are used?		
	Students have choice with their reinforcement.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	How do students respond to reinforcements?		

Figure 6. (Continued).

Class:		Date:	Time:
Lesson/Content:		Teachers:	
		1.	
		2.	
		Other adults present:	
<hr/>			
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:
Friendships	Teachers facilitate classroom friendships.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies do the teacher use to facilitate friendships?
	Friendships throughout the classroom are evident regardless of disability label.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What kinds of friendships exist?
Student Interaction	Teachers use cooperative learning strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies are implemented?
	Students interact with a variety of other students in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What kinds of interactions occur?
Peer Support	Teachers provide opportunities for students to tutor and mentor each other.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Where are these located and what materials are in that space?
	Students are taught and supported by peers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What learning activities do students engage in throughout different parts of the room?

Figure 7. Belonging Feedback Form.

Class:		Date:	Time:
Lesson/Content:		Teachers:	
		1.	
		2.	
		Other adults present:	
<hr/>			
	Look for:	Evidence:	Descriptions:
Friendships	Teachers facilitate classroom friendships.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies do the teacher use to facilitate friendships?
	Friendships throughout the classroom are evident regardless of disability label.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What kinds of friendships exist?
Student Interaction	Teachers use cooperative learning strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What strategies are implemented?
	Students interact with a variety of other students in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What kinds of interactions occur?
Peer Support	Teachers provide opportunities for students to tutor and mentor each other.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	Where are these located and what materials are in that space?
	Students are taught and supported by peers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Evident <input type="checkbox"/> Much evidence	What learning activities do students engage in throughout different parts of the room?

Figure 7. (Continued).

The following guidelines are for administrators to use when making student placement decisions and policies. While not exhaustive, they represent a range of key decisions that can foster inclusion, belonging and learning.

These guidelines can be used to avoid common administrative pitfalls that set up structures impeding achievement and creating seclusion. They are not meant to be a recipe, but are intended to help put structures and policies in place to create truly inclusive schools.

Home District: All students are educated within their school district.

No students (including students with significant disabilities, students with challenging behaviors, students with autism, etc.) are sent to other districts or cooperative programs outside of the home school district.

Home School: All students attend the schools and classrooms they would attend regardless of ability/disability or native language.

There are no schools within the district set aside for students with disabilities.

General Education Member: All students are placed in chronologically age-appropriate *general education classrooms*.

This is a legal entitlement, not based on staff preference or comfort level. Each classroom represents a heterogeneous group of students. Special education is a service, not a place. No programs, schools-within-a-school or classrooms are set aside for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are not slotted into predetermined programs, schools, or classrooms. Particular classrooms are not designated, as inclusive classrooms while others are not.

Density Check: Strive for classroom sections that represent *natural proportions* of the school building.

Natural proportions refer to the percentage of students with disabilities as compared to the entire student body. If you have 10 students with disabilities and 100 students in the school, that natural proportion is 10 percent. The national average of students with disabilities is 12 percent.

Special Education Teacher's Caseloads: Assignment of students with disabilities balances the intensity of student need and case-management responsibility.

This moves away from certain special educators being the "inclusive," "resource," "self-contained" or "emotionally disturbed" to all special educators having similar roles and caseloads. Students with disabilities with similar labels are not clustered together.

Team Arrangements: All teachers (general education, special education, ELL, reading, etc.) are assigned to instructional teams on the basis of shared students.

Special education teachers are assigned to collaborate with 2-3 classroom sections or teachers to promote collaboration, communication and co-planning. Creating effective teams of adults who work with the same students is essential; consider grouping compatible adult team members as well as building capacity in all staff members to work with all students. Professional development is needed for adults to embrace these new roles, collaborate well and effectively use meeting time.

Related Services: Related services are portable services that come to the student.

Therefore, related service teachers consult with classroom teams, demonstrate skills and techniques and provide instruction/support within the context of general education. Related service providers need to be a part of the placement of students into general education classrooms process and the daily general education planning and program.

Daily Schedule: Use the schedule to support instructional blocks, time for collaborative planning and problem solving and daily direction and training for paraprofessionals.

The master schedule is used as a tool to leverage the vision of collaborative inclusion. Creating sacred planning time for teams of general educators and special educators is essential.

Service Delivery Teams: District and school-level teams meet regularly to reconfigure resources and to revise service delivery on an annual basis.

Schools engage in an ongoing process to plan for the specific needs of their students. This involves re-examining the current way staff are used, how teams are created, the class placement process and the master schedule.

Figure 8. District/School Guidelines for Inclusive Student Placement.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented information about how to create inclusive schools focused primarily on students with disabilities, but it is important to note that students with disabilities historically and currently are not the only subset of students who have been systematically denied access to the general education classroom. Students of color and low-income students (due to overrepresentation in special education and a reliance on more restrictive placements), students learning English as a second language, students who receive related services, and students who have behavioral issues are much more likely to experience exclusion from the general education curriculum, instruction, and peers. The most important thing to note here is that access to the general education core curriculum is paramount. When students are removed from the general education classroom for any type of service, there is a trade-off and cost to that. Students miss important content and fall further behind. Inclusive school reform, when done correctly, looks not only at students with disabilities, but at all other subsets of marginalized students, and prioritizes full time access to the general education curriculum, instruction and peer groups. The focus is on seamlessly providing students the services and supports that they need within the context of general education in order for all students to reach their social and academic potential through developing a school culture in which school staff members embrace a collective ethos that all students are their students and work together to know and respond to students

collaboratively. We know this is good not only for students with disabilities, but all students.

References

- Capper, C. A., & Frattura, E. (2008). *Meeting the needs of students of all abilities: How leaders go beyond inclusion* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Capper, C. A., Frattura, E. & Keyes, M. W. (2000). *Meeting the needs of students of all abilities: How leaders go beyond inclusion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Cosier, M. (2010). *Exploring the relationship between inclusive education and achievement: New perspectives*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.
- McLesky, J., & Waldron, N.L. (2002). School change and inclusive schools: Lessons learned from practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84, 65–72.
- Pearpoint, J., O'Brien, J., & Forest, M. (1993). *Path: A workbook for planning possible positive futures: Planning alternative tomorrows with hope for schools, organizations, businesses, families*. Toronto, Canada: Inclusion.
- Peterson, J. M., & Hittie, M. M. (2003). *Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all children*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70, 55–81.
- Theoharis, G. (2009). *The leadership our children deserve: 7 keys to equity, social justice, and school reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.