Enabling Meaningful Inclusion:

Lessons from School Leaders

The Center for Learner Equity

About the Center for Learner Equity

The Center for Learner Equity is working to ensure that public schools – both within the charter school sector and beyond it – are designed for inclusivity and equity from the start. When we improve access and outcomes for students with disabilities, all students benefit.

MISSION
We are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities, particularly those in under-resourced communities, have the quality educational opportunities and choices they need to thrive and learn. We accomplish this through research, advocacy, coalition formation, and capacity building with national, state, and local partners.

VISION
Students with disabilities will have the same opportunities for success as their peers.

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Acknowledgements

The report can also be viewed **here** on the CLE website. The password to view the post is EnablingInclusion.

It has become more important than ever for schools to improve their systems for meaningfully including students with disabilities. When students are meaningfully included, the standard for success goes beyond where they are educated. The focus becomes the quality of their learning experience. In practice, **meaningful inclusion** means that all students have access to and can make progress in the general education curriculum and have opportunities to thrive academically and socially. Historically, students with disabilities have largely lacked access to high-quality and meaningfully inclusive learning opportunities. While the rate of students with disabilities who spend most of their day in general education settings has **steadily increased**, disparities in behavioral, post-school, and in **academic outcomes persist**.

Enabling Factors for Meaningful Inclusion

School and district leaders from 12 diverse school settings across the country identified the following factors as critical for their work toward meaningful inclusion:

1. **Leadership knowledge and conviction for educational equity**

2. **Equity-centered mission and values**

3. **Collaboration that cultivates collective responsibility**

4. **Ongoing professional learning of evidence-based practices that benefit all learners**

5. **Community-informed continuous improvement**

6. **External partnerships that extend capacity for meaningful inclusion**

7. **Additional funding used to support best practices for inclusive education**

The pandemic has added urgency to the need for meaningful inclusion, bringing unprecedented challenges that interrupted learning and increased the need for social, emotional, and mental health support for all students. These challenges were experienced most acutely by students who were already marginalized in the education system, **particularly those with disabilities**. Moving forward, it is clear that schools cannot go back to the status quo for educating students with disabilities. Thus, it is urgent for schools to take stock of their systems and examine the extent to which all learners, regardless of their race, disability, language, or income level, are participating and thriving.

This brief shares lessons from school leaders committed to ensuring that students with disabilities are meaningfully included and flourishing in their schools. We interviewed leaders from both traditional and charter schools of varying sizes, geographies, and levels. Their schools were also at different stages of their journeys toward meaningful inclusion. Some were designed with meaningful inclusion as a core part of their mission. Others were reevaluating and redesigning their systems toward meaningful inclusion. In spite of their differences, the school leaders agreed on seven common themes for what enables them to work toward and implement meaningful inclusion.

How did we identify and learn from school leaders striving for meaningful inclusion?

We identified the schools whose leaders are featured in this brief based on recommendations from expert researchers and practitioners in inclusive education. In total, we conducted 12 in-depth interviews with leaders from different schools, districts, or charter networks. Five interviews were with charter school or network leaders, and 7 were with traditional district school leaders. Their schools spanned levels PreK-12 and were located in geographically diverse regions of the country. We recorded follow-up podcast conversations with 9 of these schools for the Inclusive School Spotlight Series. Finally, all school leaders were invited to react to and revise this brief through a focus group and by reviewing an early draft of the brief. In aggregate, we surfaced the enabling factors highlighted in this brief through the interviews, podcast conversations, and input from practitioners actively engaged in inclusive practices.

While observing and validating meaningful inclusion in these schools was beyond the scope of this work, we vetted each school to ensure that they met specific minimum requirements:
- The percentage of students with disabilities reflects or exceeds the local natural percentage.
- The school or district websites do not contain exclusive mission statements or instructional and behavioral policies.
- Parent reviews of the school are generally positive and reflect an inclusive culture.

Across all schools, leaders leveraged their knowledge of pedagogy and policy for educating students with disabilities and conviction for educational equity to make strides toward meaningful inclusion. The leaders' knowledge guided their efforts, while their conviction helped them to stay the course over time and in the face of obstacles. While the leaders' backgrounds and training were wide-ranging, a key characteristic shared was their foundational understanding of special education policy, inclusive education, and best practices for students with disabilities. Understanding these things helped leaders make intentional decisions about the school's priorities and how resources would be used to further enhance meaningful inclusion for all students.

> **"When we consider [that] leaders are responsible for making decisions that will impact the whole organization… they must be knowledgeable. That doesn't mean that they know everything, but [they need] sufficient knowledge to lead the transformation and connect the dots."**
>
> – Emmanuel Taiwo, Director of Inclusion, **Creative Minds Public Charter School**

Leaders came to this knowledge in different ways. Some learned effective inclusive practices in preparation programs or doctoral programs, while other leaders were part of learning networks dedicated to inclusivity. For Tiffany Willis of **Firstline Schools** in New Orleans, the Special Education Leader Fellowship (**SELF**) was pivotal for learning how to cultivate a culture of inclusivity. SELF facilitated visits to other inclusive schools with exemplary practices. Alternatively, WISH and **Tomorrow's Leadership Collaborative (TLC) Charter Schools** are partners, and leaders regularly connect to discuss how to continually improve their inclusive practices.

Knowledge alone was not enough to help these leaders create inclusive schools. Each leader we spoke with was guided by a strong conviction for more equitable education. Some came to the education profession with a passion for inclusivity of students with disabilities, while others saw this conviction as a natural part of their commitment to social justice or anti-racism. The strength of the leaders' convictions meant that they were persistent over time in their efforts for cultivating inclusive schools and undeterred by obstacles. In some schools, like the high schools in the **Appoquinimink School District**, assistant superintendent TJ Vari led efforts across nearly 10 years to build an inclusive college and career pathways program. The strength of their conviction also helped the leaders to take risks and be vulnerable. In modeling risk-taking and vulnerability for their staff, leaders inspired their staff to do the same.

Antrim Elementary School is a small, rural school in New Hampshire. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is the foundation for the school's approach to effectively and equitably teaching all learners. The principal, Stephanie Syre-Hager, grew her knowledge of the UDL framework through work with **CAST**, the nonprofit research and development organization that created the framework. She went on to deepen her knowledge of UDL and teacher implementation through an EdD program. Syre-Hager's knowledge of the UDL framework and conviction in the framework as a foundation has shifted staff mindsets and transformed the school's approach to teaching over time. She was purposeful in embedding development opportunities about UDL in every staff meeting, and even started an optional UDL collaboration club for teachers to share their experience with implementing the framework and problem-solve around challenges they faced. After several years of persistence working to apply the UDL framework throughout the school, Syre-Hager started to see teachers' mindsets and the overall school culture shift.

"[Over time] teachers really [started to] understand that they had a part in designing the environment and the way the students interact with the curriculum, to engage them to want to be there. That mind shift took years... It's just making [UDL] a priority. It has become part of our language. It's become part of who we are as a staff."

Equity-Centered Mission and Values

According to the school leaders we interviewed, their schools' journeys toward meaningful inclusion went much deeper than compliance. Rather, inclusion was a core part of their equity-centered missions and values. Some of the schools, including TLC, **The Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School**, and **Tapestry Public Charter School**, were founded around the premise of inclusion. Other schools held more general equity-centered values and came to view meaningful inclusion as aligned with these values over time. **Fenway High School** was founded to focus on social justice. Principal Geoffrey Walker viewed meaningful inclusion as a natural extension of the school's pursuit of social justice.

Equity-centered missions guided school priorities and decision-making in ways that enhanced meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities. At Fenway, the school re-designed many aspects of its operation, including the cohorting model and master schedule, to provide more inclusive learning opportunities for students. For interim principal Sam Podbelski of the Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School, the value of inclusivity was explicit in the school's hiring strategy. Disability status has been a critical part of the diversity leaders value and seek in new hires. This has supported a culture in which neurodivergence is valued as an asset among staff and students alike.

"As students get older and learn about their disabilities, we don't want that stuff to be a secret. It's not a thing that you hide. It's a thing that you celebrate. So you'll find students who are a little bit older presenting about their disabilities, teaching their peers about what it is to be visually impaired, or what it means to be hard of hearing, or any [other] disability…"

– Sam Podbelski, Interim Principal, The Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School

Leader Spotlight: Cathi Davis of Ruby Bridges Elementary School

Ruby Bridges is a newly opened elementary school in Woodinville, Washington. The school enrolls about 475 students, 18% of whom are students with disabilities and nearly the same proportion come from homes in which English is not the primary language. Founding principal Cathi Davis describes the school's focus on "actively working to disrupt ableist and segregated practices in schools" as highly aligned with the school's namesake, Ruby Bridges. The school's inclusive mission has informed every aspect of its instructional model, their use of physical space, and development of an inclusive school culture.

"Our focus at Ruby Bridges is really about ensuring that our students and our families feel like we thought of them when we made this space. A lot of our work has been around centralizing belonging, placing tools and supports our students need everywhere within the learning spaces. We have centered our staff development and mutual goals on re-thinking educational experiences, and dismantling this idea of "othering spaces" that exist in many schools. Prior to opening Ruby Bridges, so many of us had experienced self contained learning spaces, a lot of pullout instruction models, and supports that really didn't centralize general education access or outcomes. Everyday at Ruby Bridges [we're] working to think outside of the box; to get rid of the boxes altogether for our students. We are proud that in our school you will not find a single space that is self contained or pull out instruction for any student group, but you'll find lots of flexibility in the learning spaces. You will see that we get spaces ready for students, not force students to earn their way or look a certain way to be a part of their learning community."

Collaboration that Cultivates Collective Responsibility

Leaders emphasized the importance of collaboration and a mindset of collective responsibility among staff to enable meaningful inclusion. Collaboration between general education, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and service providers was present in many aspects of the schools including teaching schedules, planning, and professional learning. Teachers participated in integrated professional learning opportunities, collaboratively reviewed student data and planned for individualization, and co-taught classes. Many schools offered co-teaching in every classroom. Leaders intentionally designed their master schedules and planned routines to maximize meaningful collaboration and break down silos between general and special education.

Embedding collaboration throughout their schools helped leaders to create cultures in which all staff are responsible for meeting the needs of all students. In turn, their students were provided more meaningfully inclusive learning opportunities. For example, leaders of the Charlotte Central School in Vermont were intentional about embedding special educators and paraprofessionals in all grade-level teams. Teachers on these teams trained one another in specialized strategies or even in medical interventions that the students within their grades needed. This broadened the team of teachers who were equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities and shifted teacher mindsets around their role in educating students with disabilities . In addition, many schools also had service providers push-in to general classrooms to provide specialized services to students who required them and general accommodations to all students who could benefit.

> **"We have accommodations provided to all students, and that's a key feature of our model. And some of that [means] extending what was hard fought on behalf of students with disabilities to all. So, is there only one person in [the class] that would benefit from social skills development provided by a speech and language pathologist? I don't think so. Is there only one student who needs to be pulled out of class to think about how fast their engine is running with the occupational therapist, or would all kindergartners benefit?"**
>
> – Jessica Tunney, Principal, TLC Charter School

Leader Spotlight: Jessica Tunney of Tomorrow's Leadership Collaborative (TLC) Charter School

TLC charter school enrolls a diverse group of students in grades TK-6 in Orange, California, including students with disabilities who require extensive supports and a large population of students who are learning English as a second language. At TLC, collaboration and co-teaching are the foundation of the school's model. All teachers receive professional development and on-going coaching and feedback related to their co-teaching practice. Co-teaching teams are given ample planning time, with an expectation that 2 hours is devoted to collaborative planning each week. Principal Jessica Tunney also credits the school's "daily debrief" with building the school's culture of collaboration and collective responsibility for all students. At the end of each day, all teachers in a grade-level team, including special educators, paraprofessionals, and service providers meet for 15 minutes. Each person shares a success they experienced that day, a challenge, and an action they will take tomorrow.

"...[The daily debrief] allows me to model being curious about a child. So when [teachers share something] like, this kid was up all day, and I'll say something like, yeah, I was so puzzled. Why would he [do that]? Was he seeking sensory input? What do you guys think? And then someone else will say, 'Oh, yeah, I saw he was pushing against the table like this too.' So it allows us to engage in that strategizing, that is rooted in a mindset of inclusion and respect for all. And without that our model falls apart."

School leaders believed that the work of meaningful inclusion is never complete and requires continual learning. The school leaders we interviewed provided professional learning opportunities that consistently focused on evidence-based practices that benefit all learners, including students with disabilities. Several schools, including Antrim Elementary, focused professional learning opportunities on UDL. At TLC, professional learning emphasized effective co-teaching models. Creative Minds International focused on training teachers in high-leverage practices for inclusive classrooms. Equipped with such strategies, teachers learned to approach all learners as unique and in need of individualized support. Thus, individualizing instruction for students with disabilities need not be a separate undertaking; it was part of the schools' approach to instruction and something all teachers were prepared for. Many leaders described embedding professional learning opportunities in teachers' day-to-day work through cycles of observations followed by coaching, and targeted feedback. At WISH Community Elementary School, teachers had a culture in which they would regularly observe one another's classrooms to learn from their colleagues who were more advanced in the co-teaching strategies they were trying to learn.

Leader Spotlight: Dr. Emmanuel Taiwo of Creative Minds International Charter School

Creative Minds International Charter School was opened in 2012 in Washington, D.C. It serves preschoolers to 8th graders, of whom 22% are students with disabilities. The school's director of inclusion, Emmanuel Taiwo, believed that providing ongoing high-quality professional learning was essential to the school's work toward meaningful inclusion. Taiwo's goal for professional learning was to empower all teachers to use evidence-based and high-leverage practices for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. To work toward this goal, Creative Minds leveraged a team of instructional coaches whose roles were to support all teachers, including general educators, special educators, and paraprofessionals. The coaches checked in with teacher teams daily around specific goals related to their use of evidence-based practices. Administrators conducted regular observations to see how teachers were using these practices and what additional supports they could use. Administrators and coaches worked together to give teachers targeted feedback and determine which needs could be best met through individual coaching sessions, and which warranted larger group training sessions.

"...We believe that before we can determine if instructional practices are effective, we first need to train teachers. We need to give them the opportunity to be trained and to be coached. We know from the report released by the CEC [Council for Exceptional Children] that there are high leverage practices, that when teachers implement them, student achievement will go up. Those are the practices we'll focus on [in our observations and coaching]."

Community-Informed Continuous Improvement

When asked about how they ensure their school model is both inclusive and effective for students with disabilities, all school leaders spoke to the importance of collecting data from their communities. While reviewing student data is a common activity for schools, the school leaders we spoke to went above and beyond typical data review practices in several ways. First, they sought data on a range of outcomes and metrics for students to get a better sense of how well they are meaningfully included in the school. Leaders were purposeful in disaggregating data for students who have been historically marginalized in schools based on their race, English learner status, and disability status. Tapestry Public Charter School and high schools in the Appoquinimink School District examined students' course-taking participation by race and disability status to ensure that the school's curriculum and academic pathways were accessible for all students. Schools also looked beyond academic indicators to get a sense of student wellbeing and engagement. At TLC Charter School, teams considered their students friendships and social connections as important indicators of inclusivity. Students create their own learning goals and lead conferences to discuss their progress at **Cecilton Elementary School**.

Second, they also sought input from teachers and family members as key stakeholders in the school community. Several of the schools we spoke with, including Tapestry Public Charter School, WISH Community Elementary School, and the Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School were founded and designed based on input from families of students with disabilities. Many schools fielded regular parent surveys to gather their input on the ways in which their school could be improved. In Firstline Schools, leaders survey families twice per year and ask about whether families believe the school is meeting their child's needs and keeping their child safe. Families also gave input on school design through participation on committees.

Leader Spotlight: Matthew Tyson of Tapestry Public Charter School

Tapestry Public Charter School was founded by parents of students with autism in Atlanta, Georgia. The school educates students in grades 6-12, about half of whom are students with disabilities. Tapestry uses community task forces to inform its improvement– particularly around transition planning and equitable programming. Task forces meet monthly and are comprised of parents, community members, professionals from a local university, and teachers and are driven by yearly goals. The transition task force worked toward the goal of improving transition planning and achieving a 100% graduation rate. An equity task force examined students' behavioral and academic records to ensure that behavioral and academic support were equitable by student race and disability status. Findings from the task force influenced the school's design of honors and AP courses, including the support provided for students to enroll and succeed in those courses. This resulted in the school being named as an AP Access and Support School for 2022, which means that at least 30% of students taking an AP test identified as black or hispanic and at least 30% of students scored a 3 or better on the exam.

"[The task force] did an in-depth audit of all of our students' transcripts. You could see that [student course-taking] was not proportional. There was not as much racial diversity or neurodiversity as we wanted [proportional to our student population]. Now we're really intentional about providing those opportunities to [all] kids. We make sure that we're looking really closely at who's getting recommended for these classes so that we can represent who we really are."

External Partnerships that Extend Capacity for Meaningful Inclusion

The school leaders we spoke with did not take on their work toward meaningful inclusion in isolation. External partnerships were critical to extending their schools' capacity to promote better learning opportunities and outcomes for all students. Some of the high schools had external partnerships that extended their capacity for providing students with disabilities support toward their college and career goals. High schools in the Appoquinimink School District partnered with local colleges and industries to provide differentiated college and career training opportunities. Tapestry Public Charter School partnered with Emory University to enhance their transition planning for students with disabilities. At Cecilton Elementary School, partnerships with local businesses and community organizations bolstered the individualized support and meaningful interactions they provide for all students. These partners attend ceremonies held at the end of marking periods in which all students present their learning goals, their plans for achieving their goals, and milestones along the way.

Partnerships with local colleges and universities also extended school capacity for meaningful inclusion. WISH Community Elementary School partners with Loyola Marymount University as a "research to practice" site for training teaching candidates. Teaching candidates often do their student teaching at WISH. This partnership also gives leaders at WISH a chance to influence the development of their future teaching force through their inclusive philosophy and approach to collaboration. WISH also benefits from the strengths student teachers bring.

"Our relationship with Loyola Marymount University's School of Education allows us to share best practices with preservice educators at the beginning of their development. They get to see first-hand excellent general education teachers co-teaching with education specialists and implementing co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessment. WISH benefits from having these folks increase the ratio of adults to students, and we are thrilled to learn new evidence-based practices from these fieldwork and student teachers. It is definitely a reciprocal relationship. We love serving as a professional development site for LMU [Loyola Marymount University], and we hire these teachers when we can."

– Jessica Oney, Principal, WISH Community Elementary School

The Appoquinimink School District is a large public school district in southern New Castle County, Delaware. For the past seven years, district leaders have built and refined an innovative Pathways program to prepare all students for college and career. While many typical programs include certain course requirements or minimal scores on certain exams, leaders have intentionally removed these barriers. Instead, all students are required to fully participate in a pathway, and pathways are differentiated and tailored to student strengths, goals, and needs. The variety of industry partnerships the district has cultivated as part of the Pathways program has helped leaders match all students with experiences that fit their strengths and goals. This provides meaningful opportunities for all students to fully participate in the Pathways program, regardless of their disability status or past performance.

"[We] had a student [with a disability] that, as a senior, had just come back to the district. There wasn't a clear pathway for her as she had attended multiple high schools, including one out of state. The student did not have a plan for after high school either. She was uncertain about college or even a potential career. I developed rapport with the student, and learned about her interests and hobbies. She lit up about when talking was spending time with her dog after school. In our district, we offer an Animal Science and Management pathway. Students from the pathway work with local veterinarians' offices as interns. I was able to tailor the job to her skillset, since she did not have formal animal science training. A particular veterinarian's office [which] is also a shelter, allowed the student to volunteer- socializing animals as they arrived, in preparation for adoption. The student worked 10 hours a week, for several months. Throughout, I mentored the student providing Pre-Employment Transition Services on behalf of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and soft skills training. Then, prior to graduation she was accepted to one of our local community colleges, Delaware Technical and Community College, where she entered a veterinary technician program."

– Ashley LoCasto, Work-based Learning Specialist, Appoquinimink School District

Additional Funding Used to Support Best Practices for Inclusive Education

The school leaders we interviewed relied upon additional funding to implement their inclusive school models. Their schools had different funding formulas based on their status as charter or traditional district schools and their state. Nonetheless, leaders believed that their funding from federal, state, and local formulas were insufficient for implementing best practices for students with disabilities. Leaders generally sought and utilized additional funding to hire more specialists and special educators, pay for consultants or professional development providers, or purchase specialized technologies or curricula. Having more specialists and special educators meant that students could receive more individualized support. Furthermore, teachers had smaller caseloads and more time for collaboration and planning. Creative Minds International Public Charter School uses grant funding to hire more service providers to reduce their caseloads and free up more time for observation and collaboration with teacher teams.

Philanthropic funding sources gave leaders more flexibility in how they used funding. For some, this flexibility was critical for implementing meaningful inclusion and breaking away from educational silos. TLC Charter School utilized philanthropic grant funding to hire paraprofessionals without restrictions for the student groups they must support (e.g., English learners and students with disabilities) to better implement the school's inclusive model. Fenway High School utilized philanthropic funding to pay for all teachers to become dual-certified in special education, as described more below. Additional funding also enabled schools to take risks and test new practices that may benefit their students with disabilities. Firstline Schools leveraged grant funding to test a new specialized curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities and to build a sensory room, open to all students.

Leader Spotlight: Geoffrey Walker of Fenway High School

Fenway High School is a small school within the Boston Public School system, serving approximately 400 students, nearly a quarter of whom are students with disabilities and over half of whom come from homes where English is not the primary language. In recent years, the school has been undergoing a redesign to become more inclusive. As a part of this effort, Principal Geoffrey Walker has planned a pathway for all teachers to become dual-certified in special education. Many teachers have already earned or are working toward this dual certification, and Walker has worked to get teacher buy-in for the requirement that all teachers will have this dual certification in the next two years. Doing so will enhance teacher capacity to more effectively teach all learners, and give the school more flexibility to schedule inclusive and less separate classrooms. Fenway had to utilize several sources of additional funding to put this vision in place. First, Boston Public Schools offered a program that subsidized most of the cost of teachers to become certified in English as a Second Language (ESL) or special education. Walker and his team raised grant funding from different foundations to cover the additional cost for teachers to become dual-certified. With this additional funding, teachers will not have to pay anything to become dual-certified in special education.

"[We're] trying to break down separate classrooms and move towards inclusive models, [and] some of the work that we've had to do is a lot of professional development [and] some of that is around certification. So we're requiring special education licenses for all of our teachers over time, but also [supporting] the teachers. So it's not overnight, it's over the next two years, [teachers] will have to get this certification. .. I think it's a better model, but at least in the transition, and maybe even in the long term, it might require some more resources... The district had a program... that subsidized Boston teachers to get a certification in either ESL or [special education]. So it was subsidized, but it still was about $1,000, that teachers [would have had to] pay out of pocket to do that. We were able to raise some funding from foundations, particularly, but also some individual funding, to be able to tell our teachers, you gotta get the certification, but we will pay for it."

Key Takeaways and Considerations

The school leaders who contributed to this brief used different strategies to meaningfully include students with disabilities and worked in different types of schools with unique settings. Nonetheless, they agreed that the seven factors described above were necessary for enabling their work toward more inclusive school systems. While we cannot make broad recommendations from this small and non-representative sample of schools, we highlight key takeaways and consideration for different stakeholder groups with an interest in cultivating more meaningfully inclusive schools.

Key Takeaways

- School leaders' convictions to pursue educational equity set a foundation for their work toward meaningful inclusion.

- Equity-centered school missions guided leaders' priorities and decision-making in ways that benefited students with disabilities.

- Collaboration and professional learning that broke "silos" between general and special education built teacher capacity to implement meaningful inclusion.

- Families and students were critical partners in shaping school design for meaningful inclusion.

- Schools with access to external partnerships and additional funding extended their capacity to implement best practices for inclusive education.

Considerations for Stakeholders Striving for Meaningful Inclusion

School leaders

- Seek opportunities to deepen your knowledge related to pedagogy and policy related to educating students with disabilities (e.g., professional learning communities or networks).

- Examine the school's mission statement to see if it aligns with principles of equity and inclusivity for all students.

- Use the school's equity-centered mission statement as a guide for your priorities and use of resources.

- Provide ample opportunities for collaboration between general educators, special educators, paraprofessionals, and service providers around meeting students' individual needs.

- Create professional development plans that emphasize evidence-based practices that benefit all learners and are embedded in teachers' daily practice through observation and coaching.

- Use data from families, students, and teachers to assess how the school is currently fulfilling its equity-centered mission and how it could improve.

- Cultivate partnerships with external partners that can enrich students' learning experiences and extend school capacity for meaningful inclusion.

- Secure additional funding to implement best practices in inclusive education.

District or charter network leaders

- Hire leaders with strong convictions to pursue educational equity– particularly for students with disabilities.

- Provide opportunities for leaders to deepen their knowledge related to pedagogy and policy related to educating students with disabilities (e.g., professional learning communities or networks).

- Support schools in forming external partnerships and with pursuing additional funding.

Charter school authorizers

- Support new schools with equity-centered missions and whose leaders are committed to inclusion.

- Ensure that school schedules allow for collaboration between general educators, special educators, paraprofessionals, and service providers.

- Ensure that professional development plans emphasize evidence-based practices that benefit all learners.

- Ensure that new schools are partnering with families of students with disabilities in their planning phase and that established schools are regularly seeking input from these families.