Leadership for All Students: Planning for More Inclusive School Practices

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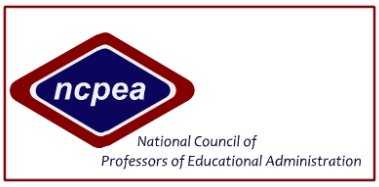

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Educational policies and leadership practice has evolved to support efforts for inclusive education for students with disabilities. This article focuses on how leaders support and develop inclusive practices for students with disability through engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting a culture of learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

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Introduction

Education for students identified as having special needs had historically been the purview of families, special schools, parochial schools, or separate institutions. Subsequently, as students came to be integrated into k-12 school systems, they were educated in segregated classrooms supported by a separate bureaucratic infrastructure with distinctly trained and certified teachers and administrators functioning within departments of special education (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, & Sailor, 2013; Pazey & Yates, 2012). Much of this infrastructure of insular and segregated set of delivery options remains operational today (Kleinhammer-Tramill, et al., 2013) and as a result education for students with special needs is often conceptualized as a primarily a concern for special educators and parents (Kavale & Forness, 2000). More recently, educational accountability policy initiatives, including Response to Intervention initiatives and the 2004 reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disability Act* (IDEA), have prompted educational leaders to consider how to ensure that all students in K-12 settings obtain the most effective instruction possible in a natural school and community ecology in which students and their parents reside (Black & Burrello, 2010; Pazey & Yates, 2012; Sailor & Burrello, 2013). Additionally, withparent and educator interest group advocacy for inclusion (Itkonnen, 2009; Reynor, 2007), ethical arguments for inclusion (Capper & Fratturra, 2009; Nausbaum, 2006; Ware, 2002; White, 2013), and collaborative activities undertaken to unify rather than segregate systems of support (Burrello & Sailor, 2013; Gravois, 2013; Sapon-Shavin, 2008), many more k-12 educational system leaders now envision and support inclusion as an organizational leadership goal. These leaders seek to build the capacity of all teachers to teach students with exceptional needs in more fully inclusive settings (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Theoharis, 2010; Shields, 2010). School-based leadership initiatives that prepare teachers to work effectively with all students in integrated schools can lead to equity commitments, high standards for meeting diverse student needs, and desired achievement outcomes (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Hoppey & McClesky, 2013; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2010; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McClesky & Waldron, 2002).

In this article, we focus on school-based leadership work that supports and develops inclusive practice. We begin by recognizing that definitions of inclusion vary broadly and discuss what constitutes inclusive practice for the purposes of this article. We then highlight and frame seven salient arenas for leadership activity that supports more inclusive practice in schools: engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

What is Inclusive Practice?

Since the 1960's education policymakers, school-based leaders, teachers, parents, and individuals with disability have advocated for broadening access to the general education curriculum to all students (Dunn, 1968; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Taylor, 2004; Will,

1986). Many of these individuals have recommended making accommodations and modifications in curriculum and instruction, pushed for better training and empowerment of teachers and principals in order to promote educating students with disabilities as a shared responsibility. They envisioned shifting roles for educators in order to promote greater collaboration between special and general educators (Dunn, 1968; Sailor, 2009; Will, 1986). As early as 1968, Dunn spoke forthrightly regarding the need to include students with disabilities in general education curriculum and instruction, as he lamented the unfavorable impact of segregating students with disabilities in special education classes on the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards the students as well as the students towards themselves.

While efforts to include students with disability in general education settings have been forwarded in schools throughout the United States, definitions of inclusion and school-based inclusive practices vary broadly (Billingsly, 2012; Crockett, 1999; Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002; Hoppey & McCluskey, 2013; Idol, 2006; Raines, 1996; Sailor & Blair, 2005; Yell, Drasgow, Bradley, & Justesen, 2004). Jackson, Ryndak, and Wehmeyer (2010) state that inclusion entails concerns with context and curriculum, as "the inclusive education approach [is one] in which the child is educated with his or her typically developing peers and with supports and skill training provided as needed to facilitate participation with peers and with the curriculum" (p.180). Taylor (2004) notes that services for students with disabilities should come with a "…presumption in favor of environments that are least restrictive and most normalized, independent, and integrated" (Taylor, 2004, p.222). Similarly, others view inclusive practices as residing within a framework of decision points that are evoked when making decisions regarding individual needs of students with disabilities (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2004). This appears consistent with current language in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (IDEA) that pinpoints general education settings as preferable, as they offer the best opportunity for students with disabilities to interact with typically performing peers and the general education curriculum (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; White, 2013; Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004), when appropriate (Taylor, 2004). This approach addresses the environmental setting aspect of the equation for service delivery, normally interpreted as inclusion, or in other words, students spending some or all of the school day in general education settings.

Others emphasize concerns with aspects of service delivery of supports (Cole, 1999; Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012 ; Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002; Idol, 2006). With a focus on building all teachers' capacity to teach inclusively, Huber, Rosenfeld, and Fiorello (2001) imply a strong role for educational leaders when they define inclusive practices as "training and curricular support in general education" (p. 497), while Farrell, et al., (2007) refer to the importance of "participation and learning" when discussing inclusive practices (p.340). Capper and Frattura (2009) assert that inclusive education is not the appropriate framework and use the term *integrated comprehensive services* to describe an approach that rejects special education/general education dichotomies and is characterized by a fluid system of supports that attends to the wide range of students in a school, not just those labeled with a disability. As such, they pursue a goal of integrated education in which "all students receive small-group or individual help at some point in the day to maximize their learning potential" (p.xix).

These and similar definitions attempt to move the debate beyond considerations of "place" and further into the realm of "service" for all students who are considered in need of specialized support services. For the purpose of this article, reference to inclusive practice denotes the institutionalization of practices and policies in which all students enjoy unfettered representation, opportunity, access, participation, and success in culturally responsive educational programs in a unified system of delivery of supports. This position draws upon Silverstein's (2000) assertion that educational policies for Students with Disabilities have 4 goals as articulated in the American's with Disability Act—equality of opportunity, full participation (empowerment), independent living, and economic self-sufficiency, as well as Rochelle Gutiérrez's (2002) conceptualization of equity as "the goal of being unable to predict student patterns (e.g., achievement, participation, the ability to critically analyze data or society) based solely on characteristics such as race, class, ethnicity, sex, beliefs and creeds, and proficiency in the dominant language" (p. 153), and Kleinhammer, et al. (2013) and Capper & Frattura's (2009) articulation of a unified and flexible system of supports for all students.

Leadership in Support of Inclusive Practices

The insistence of some that all students should be educated in the general education setting has often met with resistance by general educators and has only experienced moderate success in changing special education (Kavale & Forness, 2000). In this context, educational leaders continue to wrestle with concerns regarding institutional norms, resources, and the capacity of educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities through inclusive educational approaches (Crockett, et al., 2012; Yell et al., 2004). Developing schools that provide wide and flexible systems of supports for students with variable and sometimes significant support needs is recognized as a complex and significant challenge within educational leadership (Rayner, 2007; Sanzo, Clayton, & Sherman, 2010; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). Such complex and comprehensive leadership work often resides at the intersection of various arenas of reform activity (Kozleski, Artiles, & Lacy, 2012). In this paper we analyze and highlight seven such intersecting arenas that leaders should attend to in order to support the development of more robust and sustainable inclusive schooling practices: engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

Engaging Institutional Norms and Inertia

Pervasive institutional practices that provide separate spaces and supports outside the general education setting remain a significant challenge for educational leaders. Current placement trends indicate that, for many students with disability labels, between 80 and 98 percent of students with disabilities spend part of their school day outside of the general education setting (USDOE, 2010). Leaders should recognize that reforms that support inclusive practice can run counter to broad institutional scripts that are the result

of professional norms developed and sustained in separate institutional cultures (special education and general education teacher), and policy structures, such as state and federal regulatory systems which set up distinct special needs programs and funding (Burrello & Sailor, 2012). Such segregated systems and long-standing socially approved practices become interwoven into that which Rowan and Miskel (1999) term the grammar of schooling.

One example of the grammar of schooling for students with disabilities is highlighted by Taylor (2004), who contends that current policy language allows for school-based personnel to focus on the restrictiveness of placements in individual educational plans (IEPs) to continue to justify placing students with disabilities in separate educational environments. Skrtic (2012) points out that while IEPs were originally conceptualized as a community activity, they have become overly private, competitive, compliance driven rituals. When applying "practical" and "intensive needs" rationales, proponents of traditional programs can always defend students with disabilities need for separate specialized services, as discussions of supplementary aids and services are conceptualized in terms of intensity, with the assumption that the most intensive services cannot occur in general education settings (Cole, 1999; Jackson, et al., 2010; Taylor, 2004).

Another pertinent example of the grammar of schooling that leaders should recognize as a challenge is the belief that inclusion will negatively impact typically performing students in general education programs (Huber, et al., 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Sailor, 2009). In this context there may be incentives for "leaders within institutionalized educational environments actually sustain homogeneity by constraining innovation" (Rusch, 2005, p.89), since variations in institutionalized scripts and patterns of behavior can lead to conflict and a potential loss of legitimacy for leaders, special education and general education teachers. Theoharis (2010) notes that leaders should expect significant resistance for multiple reasons "such as staff attitudes about students with diverse need, a lack of understanding by staff and families about the inequities in schools, privileged parents advocating against reforms that are equity oriented, and the pressures of testing/accountability environments against holistic views of students" (p.92). Skrtic (2012) argues that there is a need to directly name the institutional norms around private nature of the IEP process, least restrictive environment discourses, and procedural safeguards that lead to individualized and technical framing of issues. Strong democratic leadership that institutes more collective advocacy for students with disability, their families, district personnel, and community groups is then necessary to crack the ossified nature of non-inclusive ideologies and practices (Skrtic, 2012).

Developing Inclusive Practice As a Planned Organization-wide Reform

Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) posit that inclusion is "at its core, a planned organizational reform" (424) that requires substantial commitment on the part of school leaders (Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Zeretsky, 2005). Mayrowetz and Weinstein's (1999) in depth analysis of a school-based reform for inclusion noted that it took five years for inclusion to become institutionalized, as evidenced by redundancy in leadership function multiple individuals were in a variety of roles, including those with

less formal authority. Federal and state-level policies aim to compel educators to provide students with disabilities access to general education curricula and instruction and to ensure that all students meet state academic standards (Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Nevertheless, how policies are implemented vary widely and leadership at local levels matters greatly in successfully planning and implementing a reform organization wide, particularly when the reform touches a sub-field (such as special education) that has not historically occupied a central position in the organization (Fullan, 2005; Hubbard, Mahan & Stein, 2006; Rayner, 2007; Sailor, 2009).

In particular reference to reform for inclusive practice, leaders may need to expand broader educational reform agendas that often either lack attention to students with disabilities and/or have promoted deficit thinking models around disability (Williams, Shealey, & Blanchett, 2009). In planning a school-wide reform in support of inclusive practice, educational leaders are additionally tasked with greater knowledge requirements, including knowledge of legal dimensions of practice that involve students with disabilities (Birnbaum, 2006), knowledge of collaborative teaching and support arrangements (Sailor, 2009; Zeretsky, 2005), and skill in leveraging accountability requirements in NCLB and IDEA to develop professional development initiatives that support inclusive practices (Hochberg, 2010; USDOE, 2002). Planned organizational change is sustainable in organizations if moral purpose and an express desire to alter the social environment underpin reform initiatives. Thus, leaders help to create conditions for a community wherein powerful beliefs about the benefits and moral imperative of inclusion would be come to be viewed as practical, highlighted, and nurtured (Fullan, 2005; Gravois, 2013; Reyner, 2007; White, 2013).

Making Meaning and Developing Purpose: Understanding and Articulating Support for Inclusive Practice.

English (2008) argues that leaders initiate reforms and further sustain practice through engagement with central moral questions around them. They examine who they are, what they value, what they believe to be good and true, and ponder over their ability to render decisions about a human being. Sapon-Shevin (2008) further argues that leaders should consistently articulate a vision for inclusive communities and highlight and celebrate inclusive practices as a means to work against differentiating norms constructed and maintained through the duality of special education versus general education conceptualizations. Zaretski (2005) posits that reform for inclusive practice requires understanding of inclusive theories in action. Unexamined notions of "natural limitations" and what is practical can be reinterpreted as leaders help a community contest the limiting interpretations of disability and come to understand their own complicity in limiting the humanity of students with disabilities (Ware, 2002). White (2012) notes that too often students with disabilities are continuously constructed as academic burdens and are compartmentalized as "special education" students. She argues for the need to do the deep community-level work required to reconceptualize the worth of all individuals as a moral stance in which all students are recognized for the various ways they contribute to school communities.

In addition, various iterations of research on educational reform implementation strongly suggest that learning is central to implementation and that implementers (primarily teachers) should understand why an initiative is useful in order to ultimately take ownership and shape the initiative itself (Drago-Severson, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006). School leaders' ability to articulate philosophical perspectives that underlie the debates around inclusion are important in order to guide school communities deliberations around the purposes and vision for inclusive practices. Reyner (2007) concludes that inclusive educational management is praxis-oriented in that communities do need to deliberate about the ideas behind inclusion and the means appropriate to a particular context. Likewise, leaders may have a responsibility to make meaning of inclusive practices, engaging in "cognitive acts of taking information, framing it, and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals" (Evans, 2007, p. 161). Professionals' understanding of purpose and ability to persuade others helps to sustain commitment to ongoing reform for inclusive practice over time, as well as their ability to consider counterevidence (Black & Burrello, 2010; Keys, et al., 1999; Marsh, 2007; Zeretsky, 2005).

Aligning Structures with Purpose

Consideration of who is responsible for teaching students with disabilities and concurrently establishing equitable structures and routines for the location and delivery of educational services is central to planning professional development for inclusive education (Anfara, Patterson, Buehler, & Gearity, 2006; Enemoto & Conley, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Most school variables, considered separately, have little effect on student learning, rather it is the leadership effect of pulling those variables together in a cohesive fashion that matters (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson 2010). Higher performing schools tend to award more influence to teacher teams, parents, and students (Hubbard, et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2007; Seashore Louis, et al., 2010). Similarly, successful inclusive programs are characterized by changes in school and classroom structures and clever obtainment of alignment of resources with purpose in order to support diligent and consistent work toward full participation and membership by students with disabilities (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Idol, 200; Skilton-Sylvester & Slesaransky-Poe 2009).

Drawing from Skrtc (1991), Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) argue that schools implementing inclusion need to shift from bureaucracies to professionalized "adhocracies" capable of constructing fluid systems of support. Uncertain role definitions might mean less authority to the principal as a role, but greater organizational efficacy and power. Obtaining resources, such as aides and technology supports, is a critical leadership function. Principals can provide substitutes for students' teachers to confer with previous teachers and experts that help them to understand the nature of specific disabilities. For reform for inclusion, planned adaptation of standard operating procedures, such as placing students with some of the same friends and adaptations to curriculum, instruction, and assessment become critical and action teams responsible for supporting and monitoring adaptations can be created to meet multiple times a week (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

Being attentive to opportunities for mutual adaptation of district and state level policies undergirds successful local reforms in general (Hubbard, et al. 2006; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). School administrators' roles in strategically marshaling the right information to support and motivate each teacher to work for all students despite external influences and challenges is at the heart of making professional development work for *all* students in their schools. Therefore, leadership that catalyzes ownership over inclusive practices powerfully influences the consistency with which those practices are implemented in classrooms and schools (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Little & Houston, 2003). The consistency of implementation also warrants the development of a culture of inquiry, evaluation, and learning (McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002).

Gravois (2012) argues that schools typically serve students with disabilities under a triage system of resources with three sources of resources. The classroom teacher (which is the most plentiful), ad-hoc services, which include providers such as reading specialists, intervention specialists and school counselors that can be used at some discretion of the schools. The third source is programmatic resources for Special Education that tend to be highly regulated and target highly specialized purposes (Gravois, 2013). Therefore principals need to work creatively with the first two sets of resources in order to align school structures with purposeful inclusive practice. Schools should seek to "distinguish professional needs (i.e. instructional support) from child-centered needs (i.e. disabilities). For a new system to be sustainable, this distinction must be parceled out as part of an integrated planning process and well before resources are allocated to students" (Gravois, 2013, p. 120). As more services become involved, personnel, individual skills, time, responsibility, accountability, and philosophical alignment become more important (Gravois, 2013).

Developing a Culture of Learning as an Organizational Feature

In moving toward more inclusive organizational practices, learning should be positioned as a core activity (Reyner, 2007). Critical reflection, self-evaluation, and individual and collective reflexiveness pervade learning organizations, as leaders commit to strategically and continuously invest resources in cycles of problem posing, decision making, activity enactment, and problem solving (Fullan, 2005; Reyner, 2007). Various stakeholders are sought out and engaged around the work of inclusion (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Reyner, 2007), as effective leaders of learning use networks to share information and build capacity (Fullan, 2005). Risk taking is encouraged and failure that leads to deep learning is expected (Olsen & Sexton, 2006; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore Louis, 2007).

Shulman (1997) recognizes the incredible complexity of teaching and notes that educational leaders should focus on the quality of the pedagogical interaction between teacher and students, as "efforts at school reform must give as much attention to creating the conditions for teacher learning as for student learning" (90). Shulman goes on to say that teachers learn from their own laboratory, so the leaders' work can be to appropriately support laboratories of inclusionary practice through reasoning and inquiry. Thus the work of leadership is not only to support, but also to legitimize and nurture high levels of reflection, emotion, and collaboration (Shulman, 1997). Learning to move toward

inclusive educational practices requires critical reflection on assumptions and behaviors, and principals often need to lead a process that requires teachers to examine their values and build partnerships with parents and community groups with shared values around inclusive practice. Otherwise, the push towards reform would not be sustained and revert to more comfortably understood practices of non-inclusion (Drago-Severson, 2007). While a myriad of approaches and strategies may be employed by school leaders, planning for and sustaining teacher professional development remains a fecund arena for supporting planned organizational reform towards more inclusive schooling environments (Cook & Cameron, 2010; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Fratttura & Capper, 2009; Furney, Hasazi, & Clark-Keefe, 2005).

Planning for Teacher Capacity and Professional Development

Many teachers do not feel equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Yell et al., 2004). Leaders can utilize professional development as a means to provide needed training for teachers, particularly in effective instructional and behavioral intervention strategies and collaboration skills that address the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities (Duhaney, 1999; Fisher et al., 2000; Idol, 2006; Katsiyannis, Ellenberg, & Acton, 2000). Teachers that identify as general education teachers often articulate professional development needs in curriculum and instruction modifications as well as progress monitoring (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). McLeskey & Waldron (2002) note that general education teachers often have to first experience inclusive teaching in order to acknowledge and identify areas where they need professional development. Thus, professional development for inclusive education should begin with providing teachers opportunities to gain new knowledge, practice learned skills, and receive feedback from trainers and colleagues over extended periods (Little & Houston, 2003; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008).

Teacher capacity. Generally, teachers require procedural knowledge as well as craft knowledge that allows them to differentiate instruction in response to the variable learning needs among diverse students, including students with disabilities (Buell et al., 1999; Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Klinger, 1998). Even with high quality professional development, educators vary in conceptions of self-efficacy and proficiency in adopting and adapting recently acquired knowledge and practices to their own context (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Van Hover, 2006; Katsiyannis et al., 2000; Vaughn et al., 1998). High adapters and adopters would seem to be particularly suited for inclusive education, as Brownell and colleagues (2006) found that high adopters had the most knowledge of curriculum and pedagogical approaches, student centered dispositions about managing student behavior and delivering instruction, and the ability to deeply consider students' learning processes. Early adapting teachers engage in experimentation with instructional strategies, while others request longer-term supports such as in-class modeling and in-service training provided over a significant length of time (Bryant et al., 2001). Educators are apt to adopt and adapt strategies they believe align with high-stakes standardized test preparation or other school reform initiatives (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, & Jones,

2007).

Teachers participating in one study of eight schools undergoing reform towards more inclusive practice expressed appreciation for increased professional development in effective teaching and accommodation intervention strategies. Professional training activities not only helped teachers gain valued teaching skills, but also increased feelings of efficacy concerning working with students with disabilities with diverse learning needs. Additionally, these teachers valued additional support, particularly from paraprofessionals and special education resource teachers, so much that they considered loss of such support as a deal-breaker in continuing inclusion. As inclusion progressed in the school, general education teachers increasingly viewed students with disabilities as their own and considered it their professional responsibility to teach students with diverse learning needs (Idol, 2006). In each case study school, teachers used strategies learned in professional development to meet the needs of students with disabilities, often realizing that these strategies were effective for all students (Idol, 2006).

Teachers obtain knowledge and skills in multiple contexts in addition to teacher education courses and workshops (Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001). According to McLeskey & Waldron (2002), professional development for inclusive practice includes a sequenced set of learning opportunities specifically designed for individual school contexts. Initially, professional development efforts engage teacher and administrator beliefs, understandings, and attitudes towards inclusion. Zeretsky (2005) notes that many school leaders fail to understand the theoretical underpinnings that inform their own orientation toward inclusive practice and the role of special education. Therefore, designers of professional development must consider teachers' individual learning as well as the assumptions principals and other school leaders bring to bear in shaping the context in which professional growth occurs (Borko, 2004).

Growth can be best be monitored by leaders not only through direct observation and measured student growth, but also in the informal conversations and daily routines that reveal meaning and cultural norms in a school (Donaldson, 2006). Thoughtful and meaningful planning and development of learning through multiple groupings is important to ensure consistent understanding and delivery of reforms. Often, fragmented and multiple definitions of initiatives can be present, with administrators being more likely to believe full implementation rather than those most responsible for implementing a reform, the teachers (Sanzo, et. al., 2011; Smylie, et al., 2007).

In designing teacher professional development for inclusive schooling practices, the lived experiences, value orientations, and dispositions of individual teachers need to be considered (Brownell, et al., 2006; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Teachers typically have to differentiate instructional material and methods to meet the diverse needs of all students including students with disabilities and teachers come to those efforts with varied skills and orientations to the worthiness of differentiated instructional approaches (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Leaders that attend to coordinating systematic and school-wide systems of support and resources are more likely to have teachers whose sense of efficacy and willingness to work with students with disabilities tends to increase (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Over time, full implementation and maintenance of learned knowledge about inclusive practices depends on minimizing the degree of divergence between teachers' preconceptions about the inappropriateness or inherently

insurmountable challenges of inclusion and the new knowledge and skills that provides individuals a greater sense of moral purpose, as well as competence and efficacy (Black & Burrello, 2010; Brownell et al., 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

Ongoing and job-embedded professional development. There is growing consensus that professional development should be ongoing and should incorporate training in various contexts, including the classroom. Drago-Severson's (2007) review of professional development literature argued that principal's role is often one of facilitation of embedded and practice-derived professional development that is ongoing, school-based, integrated with school reforms, and developed in a culture that encourages teachers to try new approaches.

Teachers need multiple opportunities to implement knowledge, strategies and skills, and leaders should design support systems that promote consistent reflection and highlight material successes in order to produce change in teachers' beliefs and practices that will help facilitate academic success for students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Birman, Desimone, Garet, & Porter, 2000; Brownell et al., 2006; Bryant et al., 2001; Desimone, Porter, Birman, Garet, & Sukyoon, 2002; Desimone, 2009; Garet, et al., 2001; Kazemi, & Hubbard, 2008; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002; Rayner, 2007). Teachers are more likely to adopt instructional practices when they have received professional development focused on specific instructional practices in their work setting because transfer of practices across contexts rarely occurs (Desimone et al., 2002). School administrators can provide opportunities to sustain embedded professional development over time through intensive study of content, which offers opportunities for collegial collaboration between general and special education teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell, et al., 1999). This collaboration is associated with purpose-driven task enactment associated with distributed leadership models (Smylie, et. al., 2007), capacity building targeting commitment to equitable outcomes (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2007); as well as improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002).

Yet sustained and multi-contextualized professional development is not yet a common experience for most teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Wayne, et al., 2008). Although content-focused professional development and use of mentoring/coaching support for teachers have been established as professional norms, most professional development still lacks intensity as measured by clock hours provided over the course of the school year. In their study of teacher professional development Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) suggest that professional development experiences lacked opportunities for collaborative work, which Garet et al. (2001) found promote active learning, teacher skill development, and at the organizational level, reform coherence. Teacher professional collaboration on professional tasks appears to have even greater impact when teachers focus on meaningful tasks germane to school, content-area, and/or grade level goals and responsibilities (Garet et al., 2001). While 59% of teachers found professional development in content areas to be useful, less than 50% of teachers found other professional development to be useful to them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Smith and Desimone (2003) similarly found that teachers reported that content-related

professional development as most useful. To enable such learning and professional development to occur, schools should align structures with inclusive reform purpose, as school structural changes in terms of teacher roles, student grouping practices, and scheduling are often required to make inclusion work.

Sustaining Commitment to Risk, Innovation, and Learning

Research on sustainability suggests that reforms will not be sustained without substantial investment in capacity building, as organizations that don't plan for capacity building jump from one solution to another in a desperate attempt to comply. Compliance then leads to temporary solutions and cynicism as individuals come to think of the goals of reforms as impossible (Fullan, 2005). The implementation of professional development activities should be guided in a manner that provides opportunity for teacher voice and governance so that the reforms come to be purpose-centered, understood, and "owned" rather than perceived as resource debilitating, incoherent, and distant top down mandates (Ingersoll, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006).

Meier (1997) posits that for schools to become effective learning communities that sustain democratic principles, leaders and teachers should nurture skepticism and empathy. In terms of skepticism, she argues for leaders helping develop an open mind that what may be found to be a truism or common sense today may "in time turn out to be otherwise. It behooves us, then, to listen carefully to others and to listen even to ourselves" in order to "overcome our own self-righteousness" (p.62). Schools listen to critics, look at their failures, and school leaders consistently help to question the organizations assumptions. In order not to become cynical, she argues for the habit of empathy, so that individuals imagine ourselves in the shoes of others in ways that want to run towards them, which leads to deliberatively democratic habits of the mind being developed in a school community (Meier, 1997).

For example, one study of urban educational leaders of schools that demonstrated slow, but continuous growth found that leaders sustained leadership capacity in high-performing urban schools through centering moral purpose and nurturing teacher-learning families. The principals' sense of moral commitment allowed them to support innovation and risk and bend rules and district procedures in the service of an ethically centered purpose (Weber & Kiefer-Hipp, 2009). In another case study of a school that moved to fully inclusionary practices, inclusion appeared on the agenda of every faculty meeting as a means of keeping the initiative important. The principal also used collective, grade level language rather than individualized language, and created opportunities for staff to gather and celebrate success and reflect on "inclusion moments" (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper's (1999) case study of an inclusive school found a supportive environment where critique and risk was encouraged, although the process of how to get there was debated and alternative frameworks were considered, the ultimate goal of full inclusion was held as non-negotiable. Trust was present and bolstered through consistent communication of successes and the attraction of like-minded teachers to the school. Teachers' sense of efficacy and professional development was facilitated through showing concrete examples and highlighting teacher-led solutions.

In leading schools toward more inclusive practice, uncertainty and complexity are inevitable and schools may struggle with a sense of ceaseless compromise in their attempt to resolve dilemmas of infinite needs and finite resources (Reyner, 2007). Leaders can recognize that problems tend to be more severe and complex at first, and they should actively work on developing consistency and coherence over time, as these tend to make inevitably complex endeavors more manageable (Fullan, 2005).

Leaders committed to an equity-related investment in inclusive practices should take a long-term approach that includes feasible actions steps that are undertaken while sustaining the conversation over time. Moreover, leaders should anticipate and persevere in the face of inevitable pushback from groups that might see an investment in inclusive practices as unfair to them (Conner & Ferri, 2007), incorporating change planning, including communicating transformative reform purposes and progress with a broad community, into this long-term approach (Brown, 2006; Plecki, Knapp, Castaneda, Halverson, & LaSota, 2009). Additionally, Seashore Louis and colleagues (2010) highlight the importance of succession planning and the important concept of leadership as a property of a social system. Stability and improvement are symbiotically constituted as stability in authorized roles at the district, principal, and assistant principal positions are important in sustaining initiatives toward inclusive practice.

Concluding Perspective

Although the importance of the importance of teaching all students has been recognized in various educational forums and in major policy and legislative initiatives, the debate around students with disabilities still largely centers around the where and how to educate students with disabilities. Additionally, this debate often centered within the realm of special education and teacher education. In this article, we sought to integrate a discussion of inclusive practice with professional development and leadership literature. Inclusive practice needs to be conceptualized as a collective endeavor that requires leadership that plans and aligns developmental supports in order to sustain organizational learning and commitment to inclusive educational practices.

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