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Causton, Julie, & Theoharis, George. (2014). *The Principal's Handbook for Leading Inclusive Schools*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

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In *The Principal's Handbook for Leading Inclusive Schools*, Causton and Theoharis provide information to school site administrators that will help develop their inclusive mindsets, dispositions, knowledge of successful inclusive practices, and organizational leadership skills necessary to implement an effective inclusion program. Although this book is written to help principals and school administrators create and maintain authentic inclusion programs, the information provided can also benefit other stakeholders (e.g., special education directors, special an general education teachers, parents) that have a vested interest in supporting inclusive education. A few hallmarks of each chapter are: comics with an inclusive

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message found on chapter introduction pages, a section of commonly asked questions that includes the authors' insightful answers that pertain to the information presented in that chapter, and a conclusion section that summarizes the most critical concepts presented in the chapter.

The present reviewers' commentary on this book is rooted in their combined experience of leading an inclusive high school for over 20 years, where they both served as an inclusion support special education teacher and department chair to support students with disabilities in general education classes in a fully inclusive high school. In our opinion, this book speaks to the necessity of ethical and moral leadership for maximizing the success of all students with disabilities in an era of high stakes accountability. From our years of experience leading inclusive schools we know that schools can offer a fully inclusive model when the outlined procedures included in the book are in place. We not only entirely support the inclusive framework presented by the authors, but we also promote the suggested inclusive practices because we concur that these are essential to lead inclusive schools. We briefly summarize the main points of each chapter and highlight features that offer a "how to" guide for educational leaders to successfully lead inclusive schools.

Chapter 1, "The Principal's Role in Inclusive Schools," provides a model for principals to engender a successful fully inclusive educational environment. These priorities are: setting a bold, clear vision of the inclusion model; engaging staff in collaborative planning; and developing teams of leaders and supporting them with implementation efforts, while reducing other district and school level initiatives that place a burden on school staff. Furthermore, any program that occurs in a school should fit naturally within the inclusive setting. The authors acknowledge that the role of the principal has become increasingly complex in recent years and that strong site leadership is a key component of running an effective school. Specifically, principals have control on how students are scheduled into classes, the expectations of the teaching staff, and setting the overall climate of the school. It is important that principals set the precedent that the school will operate as a full inclusion program with shared responsibility for ensuring successful

implementation. One way to achieve this is to engage the teaching staff in a collaborative process with their peers. Above all, this chapter outlines how critically important the role the principal can serve a school that invests in creating and sustaining a successful full inclusion program.

Chapter 2, “Special Education”, is an overview of special education that is aimed to provide background knowledge of each disability category before proceeding in the book. A general definition of inclusion is provided yet the authors remind the readers that special education is not a place but rather a set of services that are portable and can be delivered inside a general education setting. This chapter discusses the negative social implications of disability categories and identifying children that meet those disability definitions. The authors state that labeling an individual with a disability should be used to indicate patterns of difficulty, which can often lead to people forming perceptions based on the label a person is given rather than their actual abilities. Labeling people with a disability has shown to be stigmatizing that may result in low self-esteem and ultimately be associated with negative outcomes such as social and educational isolation. The second part of the chapter identifies commonly used acronyms in the field of special education (e.g., emotional disturbance [ED]) and briefly describes the federally recognized 13 disability categories that students may qualify for under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to receive special education supports and services. Although these disability categories can assist school personnel in understanding the nature of the disability in question, the authors indicate that it is far more important to learn the abilities of each student so that school personnel may provide the adequate supports to meet each individual’s needs appropriately.

Chapter 3, “Inclusive Education”, provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of inclusion. Specifically, this chapter covers the history of inclusive education, the sense of belonging, major legal concepts, the definition of inclusive education, indicators of inclusive education, and individualized education program (IEPs). The authors include a checklist of sample supplemental supports, aids, and services that can be utilized by school personnel to ensure students with disabilities in general education

classes receive what they need for their success. Perhaps the most salient viewpoint of this chapter, as well as the inclusion movement in general, is the basic human need to feel included and experience a sense of belonging.

Excluding students from their peers can manifest in a whole host of negative outcomes including internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Causton and Theoharis provide the reader with several indicators that embody full inclusion. These include: having the number of student with disabilities in general education classes reflect the natural population of students with disabilities in the school (i.e., no more than 13% to adhere to the most recent federal statistic), general and special education teachers working collaboratively with shared responsibility for student outcomes, community building to ensure students feel a connectedness to their peers and staff, differentiation of content and materials to accommodate the range of student ability levels, delivering supports and services (e.g., speech language pathology) inside the context of the general education setting rather than pulling students out, and to maximize engaging instruction that feature working with peers in group formats, active learning opportunities and minimizing whole class, and teacher-led lectures. The authors point out how the principles of inclusion fit nicely into response to intervention (RtI) models, in that school personnel must be responsive to all students, and of particular concern are the students who display behaviors that put them at risk for academic failure. Instead of school personnel looking at the student as being deficient, instruction and educational practices should be examined to ensure that they are effective for as many students as possible. The last section outlines the basic information on an IEP.

Chapter 4, “Leading Inclusive School Reform”, focuses on the process as well as the leadership involved in inclusive school reform for students with disabilities. Causton and Theoharis outline a 7-step process and stress the importance of carrying it out in a democratic and transparent manner. These steps include: (1) setting a vision, (2) examining existing special education service delivery, (3) aligning school structures to serve all students inclusively, (4) rethinking how staff is utilized, (5) improving classroom practices, (6) ongoing monitoring, obtaining feedback from stakeholders,

adjusting when necessary and celebrating successes with regularity, and (7) create an ongoing climate of belonging among administrators, staff, and students. The authors note that the research and their experience with inclusive school reform that all seven aspects are required for successful implementation. Schools need to understand that when students are excluded from the general education environment, they lose opportunities of peer interaction and socialization, high quality instruction from content area experts, and access to the general education core curriculum. Therefore, to ensure these opportunities are not lost, school personnel should focus on providing students with disabilities the support and services they require within the context of general education so they may reach their social and academic potential.

Chapter 5, “The Backbone of Inclusion”, directly refers to leading effective collaboration. The principal, in his/her position as the school site leader, must play a number of key roles to foster effective collaboration among his/her staff. This includes assembling instructional teams of school stakeholders (e.g., general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.), creating inclusive schedules for special education specialists (e.g., Speech Language Pathologist), setting and supervising the inclusive instructional expectations, provide time for common planning among teams, providing professional development to school staff on collaboration and co-teaching strategies, and supplying symbolic and material support to all staff members. When creating instructional teams, the principal should talk directly to staff to find out who they think they are best suited to collaborate with, while also drawing on their own knowledge of staff strengths and personalities to create dynamic teams. The instructional teams should be made up of special educators, general educators, paraprofessionals, family members, and specialists (e.g., OT’s, PT’s, SLP’s, psychologists, social workers, vision teachers & audiologists). Merely putting instructional teams together does not ensure that effective collaboration will take place. To achieve successful teaming, the authors include guiding questions to encourage team members to learn about their peers on a personal and professional level to achieve effective collaboration.

Another key highlight is the explanation of the co-teaching model that is often implemented in inclusive schools. Causton and Theoharis present common co-teaching arrangements suggested by Friend and Reising (1993) and Friend and Bursuck (2011). They suggest that these co-teaching arrangements should be utilized whenever more than one teacher is in a classroom versus only employing these co-teaching practices when multiple teachers are scheduled to be in the room for the duration of the period. The most common co-teaching arrangements are: parallel teaching, station teaching, team teaching, alternate teaching, one teach-one observe, and one teach-one assist. The authors caution that the one teach-one assist method, while the most commonly practiced, is the least effective co-teaching arrangement. While co-teaching can be an extremely effective arrangement, sometimes barriers arise that need prompt attention. For instance, working in collaboration can sometimes lead to conflict between colleagues. Included in this chapter are the Bonner Foundation's (2008) suggestions for handling conflict. A common barrier that instructional teams across the country reported was inadequate time to communicate or collaborate with their colleagues. The authors propose strategies to help schools find solutions to design common planning time within the school schedule to allow for ample communication and collaboration. A recent systematic review of inclusion and co-teaching research supports this notion; Solis and colleagues (2012) found that teachers value support from principals as well as having the time necessary to communicate and plan with special education support staff. Lastly, at fully inclusive schools where teachers assume shared responsibility of students, confidentiality must be of the utmost importance. Instructional teams should discuss how they would answer questions when a student's confidential information is at stake. The principal's role of fostering collaboration among the teaching staff is one of the most crucial aspects in starting and maintaining an effective full inclusion program.

Chapter 6, "Rethinking Students: Presuming Competence", challenges educators to embrace a student strengths based approach. In order to lead an inclusive school a principal will need to adopt the inclusive culture. Depending on the current culture of the school, this may require a paradigm shift for staff. The authors cite Armstrong's (2000)

research on using multiple intelligence theory in the classroom. Armstrong recommends that educators purposefully rethink the way they describe students by framing students' disabilities as difficulties. This positive mindset acknowledges what students can do and how they can learn versus judging what they cannot do. In this vein, a student's intelligence, which is generally measured by a student's ability to perform on an academic measure such as an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test, should be thought of as a student having multiple intelligences. This positive perspective of students encourages educators to use a variety of teaching strategies and creative activities that intend to strengthen a student's intelligence area(s) in an acknowledgment of the student's abilities as opposed to their disability. Finally, two nonnegotiable cultural norms that must be modeled by all educators are age-appropriate language and person-first language. Communication with students with disabilities should resemble socially acceptable language that an educator would use to engage a student without a disability. When referencing a student with a disability, educators must model inclusive education thinking, in that the student is considered first before educational placement/location. In person-first language, educators should address the student as a person first before describing him/her. An example of person-first language is "Tom has autism. He is going to a movie." instead of "Autistic Tom is going to a movie." Also, it may be unnecessary to use a student's disability as a descriptor or defining characteristic in some cases, like in the example above. Educators should rethink how they teach to strengthen students' intelligences and presume student's competence in an inclusive mindset.

Chapter 7, "Providing Academic Supports", begins with defining three terms, accommodations, modifications, and adaptations, that are critical to differentiate between to enable students with disabilities to be successful learners and actively participate with students without disabilities in classroom and school activities. The authors cite the definitions accepted by the PEAK Parent Center (n.d.). Accommodations are changes in how a student gains access to information and demonstrates learning. Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn. Adaptations are these changes that allow true access to the general education curriculum. The remainder of the chapter presents general and content-specific

strategies as well as the use of assistive technology to support inclusion. Principals should promote a wide range of strategies to ensure students receive helpful and appropriate academic support. Some of the suggested strategies include: high expectations, extended time to meet expectations, preteaching, peer supports, and teaching organizational skills. These academic supports may vary across a student's course schedule. For example, to successfully access the curriculum in science a student may need the material presented orally whereas in math the student may need to use an assistive technology device such as a large keyboard. Educational leaders, including teachers, should be aware of available accommodations and modifications at their school and within their district to academically support students with disabilities.

Chapter 8, "Providing Behavioral Supports", reinforces that educators should create a learning environment where students can achieve success and meet educational demands. To establish a safe and supportive school, educators must proactively prepare a behavior management plan that includes: student and teaching interaction through building relationships, developing rapport and respect, setting students up for academic success by matching instructional strategies to their strengths, promoting positive behavior, and meeting students' emotional-social-behavioral needs. Some of these behavioral supports may take an extended period of time to observe their effectiveness. It is imperative that educators continue to support students' learning of the expected behaviors through a series of trials and respond with meaningful rewards when appropriate. Like in previous chapters, the authors address the importance of perception and thinking to effectively communicate with students whose inappropriate behavior is escalating. Instead of viewing challenging behavior as a negative it is recommended that educators ask new questions about behavior in an attempt to focus on a student's strengths and abilities. An example of a positive approach to understand what a student needs is to ask, "What can I do to help Matt attempt the assignment during allotted class time?" instead of "Why does Matt distract his peers and socialize when I provide class time to begin homework?" Lastly, the authors explain that behavior is a form of communication. As leaders of inclusive schools, principals must design a learning environment where

students feel supported to meet the behavioral expectations. Educators need to be aware of how to deescalate potentially dangerous situations and how to resolve conflict or respond to students following their episode of inappropriate behavior. We encourage principals to consider implementing a school wide positive behavioral intervention and support (SWPBIS) framework to effectively support students' behavior. A Supporting Behavior Feedback Form is presented at the end of the chapter as a method for principals to give feedback to teams about student behavior.

The final chapter, Chapter 9, "Supporting You, Supporting Them: Caring for Yourself", concludes that leading inclusive schools takes both professional and personal care. Professionally, principals will need to design a schedule for continuous professional development and for time to communicate with colleagues to collaboratively support students across their school day. Some schools have adopted Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as an organizational approach during their collaboration time yet other schools have less structured frameworks operationalized. Regardless of one's model for supporting successful inclusion, the focus should be on what occurs during this sacred time with colleagues. We believe that in order for principals to lead inclusive schools they need to stimulate creative problem solving to discover solutions to unforeseen challenges that inevitably will arise. Principals must focus on sustainability as well.

Implementation of the following professional strategies is expected if principals desire to sustain inclusive practices in their schools: (1) communicating purposefully and authentically, (2) developing a supportive administrator network, (3) working together for change, (4) engaging in professional learning, and (5) building relationships. In the context of present demands of accountability, the authors identify four self-care strategies: prioritizing life outside of school, utilizing mindful diversions, engaging in regular physical activity, and providing for others. Today's principals must be responsive to new job descriptions that oblige them to create mechanisms for supporting all students to reach their full academic and social potential in inclusive schools.

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