

SEVEN PILLARS OF SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION*Moving from “Why?” to “How?”***Tim Loreman**

Editorial Note: As this article is written by one of the editors of the International Journal of Whole Schooling, Dr. Michael Peterson (Professor at Wayne State University and Director of the Whole Schooling Consortium) acted as editor in place of the author, alongside Billie Jo Clausen. This article underwent the same rigorous double peer-review and revision process as all articles submitted to the IJWS, and the decision to publish was made independently by Dr. Peterson and Ms. Clausen.

Abstract

This paper discusses the creation of essential conditions in schools and school jurisdictions in order to support the inclusion of the diverse range of learning preferences and needs found in today's classrooms. In order for inclusion to be successful educators need to work towards an educational climate and set of practices which include the adoption of positive attitudes; supportive policy and leadership; school and classroom processes grounded in research-based practice; flexible curriculum and pedagogy; community involvement; meaningful reflection, and; necessary training and resources.

Introduction

The discourse around inclusive education is slowly moving from a justification of *why* the approach is one which should be adopted, to *how* it can be successfully implemented (Forlin, Sharma, & Loreman, 2006). The advantages of an inclusive approach toward educating all learners has been well outlined in research and literature. It is increasingly evident, especially over the past 10 years, that there are social, academic, and even financial benefits for school systems and all children involved in inclusive education (for example see Bunch & Valeo, 1998; Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Manset & Semmel, 1997; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Sobsey, 2005). Add to this the moral, ethical, and social justice issues which have been raised in the literature (Lindsay, 2004; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2005; Slee & Cook, 1999; Uditsky, 1993), and it becomes clear that segregated forms of education are becoming increasingly hard to justify on any level. Indeed, the argument that segregated forms of education have any real benefits for children (over the alternative, inclusive education) is a position which is now indefensible. Clear advantages of segregated education are not evident in the research literature, and never have been (Sobsey, 2005). It is now time to accept that most teachers work in environments where children with diverse needs are present, and to examine how they can best be supported in order to provide meaningful education for all children. What follows is intended to be a catalyst for conversations around the conditions required for 'good' inclusion to occur, rather than an exact blueprint for implementation.

Inclusive education

Definitions of inclusive education abound. It is because of this that it is important that the term be defined prior to any discussion. The term 'inclusive education' has been variously interpreted to, at times, mean the exact opposite of what it should mean. For example, consider a recent conversation with a Canadian teacher in which she said "I do inclusive education in my segregated classroom because all these children with behaviour problems are included together." This is an Orwellian (1949) misinterpretation (likely deliberate, considering it came from someone working in the 'special education' field) of the term 'inclusive education.' Loreman and Deppeler (2002) argue that inclusive education for a child with a disability in almost every way resembles the sort of education that children without disabilities are able to enjoy. This means no segregated classes, and full membership in the regular classroom, where children with disabilities spend the vast majority of their time and participate in all class activities, even if these need to be modified. According to Loreman and Deppeler, one goal of inclusion is for every school to be ready to not only accept, but welcome children with disabilities. This may involve not only a change in the way schools are structured and work, but also in the attitudes, beliefs, and values of school staff. This echoes Uditsky (1993) who states that

In the inclusive classroom the student with a significant disability, regardless of the degree or nature of that disability, is a welcomed and valued member. The student is: taught by the regular classroom teacher (who is supported as needed); follows the regular curriculum (with modification and adaptation); makes friends; and contributes to the learning of the entire class [and]...participates in all aspects of school life according to her interests and moves year to year with her peers from kindergarten through high school (p. 79).

Seven pillars of support for inclusive education

There is now a large body of literature on how best to support inclusive education. Much of this literature, however, directly examines and advocates specific classroom practices and strategies (see for example Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2005; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). This area is important and worthy of attention, however, literature on creating the essential background conditions to support these practices is yet to be fully explored and is equally worthy of attention. The 'seven pillars of support for inclusive education' outlined below are an attempt to provide structure for the range of literature and research which already exists in the field, and to promote further analysis and discussion of this area. The seven pillars of support can be seen as a bridge between the justification for following an inclusive approach, and the more pragmatic classroom practices and strategies. They occupy the 'middle ground' and hopefully provide context on which effective practices can be based.

The selection of the analogy of 'pillars' evokes images of different contextual factors working together to support a larger idea. In this case that larger idea is 'effective inclusive education'. Pillars are interdependent and support little in isolation from one another. This highlights the importance of considering all aspects of the creation of essential conditions for inclusive education, which are both separate (for the purposes of this discussion), and linked (in their

collective importance in achieving a common end). Finally, pillars are resilient, and under the right conditions provide a framework which is strong and long-lasting.

Each of the seven pillars of support represents a theme which is evident in the research and literature. These themes include the development of positive attitudes; supportive policy and leadership; school and classroom processes grounded in research-based practice; flexible curriculum and pedagogy; community involvement; meaningful reflection, and; necessary training and resources.

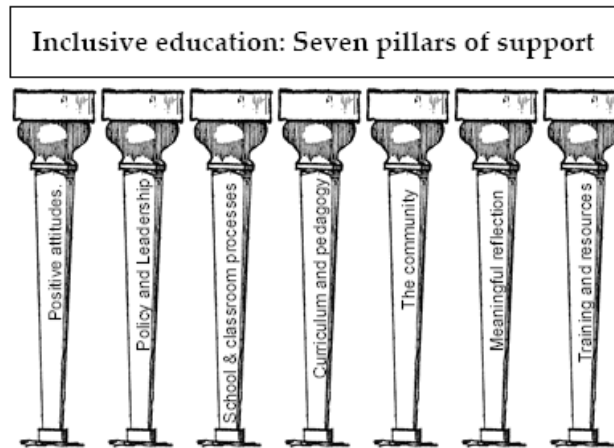


Fig. 1: Inclusive education: Seven pillars of support.

Pillar one: Developing positive attitudes.

The development of positive attitudes in educators is central to the accomplishment of inclusive education (Wilczenski, 1992; 1995). Positive attitudes allow and encourage practices which, according to Hobbs and Westling (1998), virtually guarantee the success of inclusion. A number of researchers have found that attitudes govern the day-to-day practices of classroom teachers meaning that many decisions about what teaching strategies to use, or what sort of activity to involve children in, are based on attitudes. Where teachers want to involve all learners, they generally tend to devise activities which support this goal (Forlin, 2003; 2004; Forlin, Jobling, & Carroll, 2001; Subban and Sharma, 2006). Negative attitudes towards inclusive education have been correlated with low expectations for the achievement of children with disabilities, which in turn has a negative impact on student performance (Forlin, Tait, Carroll, & Jobling, 1999; Wilczenski, 1993). Given this, it is important that school jurisdictions take steps to ensure that teachers in schools hold positive attitudes towards children with disabilities and inclusive education. This can be achieved through policies which only allow the hiring of new teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion, and also by providing teachers with positive experiences with inclusive education. Efforts should be made at all levels to present inclusive education as effective and positive for all, and to support it with other elements discussed in this paper below. Further to this, the prevailing level of implementation of inclusion in a region impacts attitudes towards inclusive education (Moberg, Zumberg & Reinmaa, 1997; Sharma et al., 2006), so it is important that school jurisdictions develop a wide 'culture of inclusion'.

According to Murphy (1996) negative teacher attitudes towards inclusion, once developed, are extremely difficult to change. This highlights the importance of pre-service teacher education which engenders positive attitudes towards inclusive education in beginning teachers (Forlin et al., 2001; Loreman & Earle, in press; Murphy, 1996; Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, & Earle, 2006). Further, education graduates should be encouraged to continue with further education, not only as a matter of professional obligation, but also as a means to stay current with the latest developments in effective education for all. Research by Sharma, Ee, & Desai (2003) and Sharma et al. (2006) shows a correlation between positive attitudes towards inclusive education and teachers and pre-service teachers who have higher levels of education. The development of positive attitudes towards inclusive education needs to be tackled at all levels, from pre-service teacher education to experienced teachers in the field. While positive attitudes may do much to promote the success of an inclusive approach, negative attitudes will surely ensure its failure.

Loreman (in press) identified four areas in which educators in North America might hold negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. He argues that there is a tendency in Canada to see children with disabilities as fragile, incompetent, unable to communicate in ways which are valued, and as having special needs rooted in deficit. Loreman suggests that the more positive views of children with disabilities and their place in the community held by educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy, provide a useful lens through which educators who hold these negative views can consider different ways of valuing all children.

Pillar two: Supportive policy and leadership.

There are now a number of international agreements and declarations which support inclusive education, the most notable being the 1994 UNESCO document known as the Salamanca Statement. This internationally recognized statement is unequivocal in its support for inclusive education. It has been argued that international documents like the Salamanca Statement have produced "...most noticeable outcomes in the move towards inclusive schools..." (Forlin, 2006, p. 265). However, while few people disagree with the positive impact the Salamanca Statement and others like it have had in the move towards inclusive education, Vlachou (2004) cautions that "...declarations may create conditions for policy practices (i.e. legislation), but they do not determine them" (p. 3). Slee and Cook (1999) and Lindsay (2004) argue that local policy and legislation should not restrict access (as it often does) but rather needs to be consistent with the international policy. However, while local inclusion policy, when consistent with international standards, can be helpful (Lindsay, 2004) there are many instances where 'good' inclusion policy and legislation have not produced successful outcomes (Kerzner, Lipsky, & Gardner, 1999; Thomas, 1999).

Where local inclusion legislation and policy is consistent with international standards and yet still does not produce successful outcomes, this is likely the result of a disconnect between the intent of the policy, and the willingness of local educators to comply with the intent and 'spirit' of the requirements. A key element in creating inclusive schools is the support of school and system leaders (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Bauer & Brown, 2001; Loreman, 2001; Loreman et al., 2005; Loreman & Raymond, 2005). Conversely, even supportive school leaders will have difficulty promoting inclusive education in an environment devoid of supportive policy and/or

legislation. This sort of policy is useful for support when the move towards an inclusive school (or district) setting by educational leaders is questioned (Kennedy & Fisher, 2001). This implies a symbiotic relationship between school leadership and policy and law.

At the school level a model of 'shared leadership' is important in assisting in the acceptance of an inclusive approach by all members of the school community (Bauer & Brown, 2001; Loreman & Deppeler, 2002). Under this model school administrators portion out 'packages' of responsibility for the running of the school. The provision of a 'leadership team' to guide and support school inclusion is helpful both in terms of reducing the workload of the administrator, and more importantly in terms of promoting the view that inclusion is a shared, whole-school responsibility. There are also a number of things a school administrator can do to better support inclusive education. According to Andrews and Lupart (2000) they can promote the merger of 'special' and 'regular' education by assisting all staff to transition into their new roles and share expertise. School administrators can further develop community support networks within the existing school community, and with other organizations such as advocacy bodies and other non-governmental organizations. They can foster respect for individual differences; promote consultative, cooperative, and adaptive educational practices; promote the goals of inclusive education, and; empower teachers through providing them with some level of autonomy and recognizing their achievements.

Loreman (2001) cites an instance of successful high school inclusion where the school principal was unequivocal in his support for inclusive education. The school claimed to operate within a culture of caring, kindness, and mutual respect and support. When asked about how this culture came about and why the school was a caring environment in which to work and learn, the principal remarked that "It does come back to relationships. We don't tolerate people shouting at kids and we don't tolerate people being unkind to each other. At the base of that is probably some sort of a notion of justice." (p. 144). The principal cited an emphasis on teamwork at the school as a contributing factor to the school culture. In his words:

You're going to use team based approaches to things. You're going to use...group learning settings that are going to recognise the mix of abilities that are within any learning setting. You're going to recognise that the differences amongst people are things that should be celebrated. After all, in a group some are going to be able to contribute really well and provide leadership and rich insights into certain things, where some aren't. Flip the activity around and do something else and it all might be quite different (p. 144).

Other reasons given for the positive culture in the school included the selection of a caring staff, and positive, shared leadership. It should be noted, however, that shared leadership in and of itself will not always overcome entrenched practices of segregation. Shared leadership works best where a culture of inclusion (such as that mentioned above) has been fostered. If the majority of school and jurisdiction staff do not support inclusion, then the simple sharing of leadership with those people will be unlikely to further the practice of inclusion education.

Pillar three: School and classroom processes grounded in research-based practice.

For inclusion to be truly successful, the entire school needs to be committed to making it so as it is extremely difficult for individual educators to ‘include’ in isolation; or even worse in an environment which does not support the approach and advocates segregated forms of education (Deppeler & Harvey, 2004; Jorgensen, 1998; Kennedy & Fisher, 2001). Schools need to consider the ‘big picture’ more frequently than they might already. Why do they exist? Who do they serve? If schools truly believe that they are there to meet the educational, emotional, social, and other needs of children then it stands to reason that they need to be willing to change and adapt to suit these individuals rather than the other way around. Indeed, for schools to be effective it is essential that they change and adapt to meet the diverse needs of all learners (Jorgensen, 1998; Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; Loreman & Deppeler, 2002; Loreman et al., 2005).

At the school level there are a number of organizational factors which need to be considered. There is a need for innovative scheduling of time and facilities (Jorgensen, 1998), and this need is especially acute at the Grade 7-12 level which traditionally teaches children by ‘subjects’ in brief, discrete periods of time. Children may not learn best in 50-minute subject blocks, and moving from classroom to classroom, working multiple teachers, is also a practice that needs to be examined. As part of this re-thinking of scheduling, the need for educators to have common planning time should also be considered. This can help with producing more robust learning experiences, and can foster greater partnerships between colleagues. Kennedy and Fisher (2001) suggest the implementation of multidisciplinary ‘grade level’ departments in the Gr. 7-12 years as opposed to the traditional subject-based ‘departments’ or groupings of teachers. For example, instead of all the English teachers from Gr. 7-12 being grouped together, Kennedy and Fisher suggest that it might be beneficial to have, say, all the Gr. 8 teachers grouped together as an administrative and planning unit. Teachers need to contemplate new roles for themselves – moving away from being ‘science teachers’ to being ‘teachers of children’. Many elementary and early education teachers understand this, and this understanding needs to be further considered at higher levels in educational systems. Indeed, it is not only ‘regular education’ teachers that need to contemplate new roles. Special education teachers and support staff also need to consider how their skills can be used to enhance and enrich the education of all children in systems moving towards inclusive education (Jorgensen, 1998).

In terms of other organizational factors, it is essential that children be organized into heterogeneous groups, and some schools could even consider the use of multi-age mixed-ability class groupings (Elkins, 2005) which could have many advantages in terms of mentoring, empathy, social skills, and academics. Heterogeneity, however, also raises a number of issues of its own. In some circumstances this can imply that some children may need to focus on curriculum which is inappropriate. For example, is the content in an advanced mathematics class appropriate or useful for a child with a significant cognitive delay? Creative thinking and intelligent modification and adaptation of curriculum in these instances can overcome many of these issues, however it may not overcome all of them. The absence of functional skills (such as money handling and measuring) in instances such as this can present a very real problem for children with diverse needs and their teachers. This may, however, be a problem for more than just children with disabilities. The curriculum in many parts of the world has been criticized for being inappropriate for children in general with the absence of functional skills being viewed as a real problem for all students (Goodman & Bond, 1993). The central questions of why we have

schools and what children need to learn in order to prepare them for life after school need to be revisited and carefully considered by all involved in education.

Other organizational factors include the need for classrooms to share human and other resources (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Bauer & Brown, 2001) and engage in meaningful professional development (Loreman et al., 2005). Loreman, Dappeler and Sharma (2005) suggest that schools support inclusive education through ‘invisible’ models of support to teachers rather than to students. Under this model, it is the teacher who implements most inclusive practices, working closely with a team of therapists and consultants who mostly stay ‘behind the scenes’ in a supportive relationship. Teachers should work in differentiated teams with teaching assistants and other support staff (Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelberg, 1993). This means that teachers and assistants see themselves as being in different roles to achieve the same ends. Teachers should not be ‘downloading’ the entire responsibility for a child’s education on an assistant. Similarly, teachers should not take on this role entirely themselves, and should be able to rely on assistants for help where it is needed and useful. This requires lengthy discussion and negotiation between teachers and assistants as they define their roles within the contexts in which they work.

At the classroom level physical access and safety need to be the first considerations (Elkins, 2005). On the surface this might seem a simplistic point, however all too often the physical environment is ignored in favor of issues which are perhaps more intellectually exciting. It needs to be said that adequate access, lighting, and technological aids are fundamental if children are to even get inside the classroom door, and some even consider the physical environment to be so important that it is referred to as an extra ‘teacher’ (Rinaldi, 2006). Related to the environment is the educational climate in a room. Children respond well to supportive (but not inflexible) classroom routines (Loreman et al., 2005), and it is imperative that protocols and record keeping systems are established for medication administration and other such important events. Teachers should also work with students to foster friendships and positive relationships between all children in the classroom. Mutual support and respect between students regardless of perceived levels of status or ability is key.

Pillar four: Flexible curriculum and pedagogy.

The school curriculum in many western countries presents significant challenges for educators trying to implement an inclusive approach to education. There is a tendency for curriculum in today’s school jurisdictions to be linear, inflexible, divorced from context, overly specific, centralized, and unresponsive to the needs of minority groups (Goodman & Bond, 1993). This sort of prescriptive curriculum has led to much teacher-centered instruction, as teachers struggle to meet mandated ‘outcomes’ which students must demonstrate. Inclusion benefits from more child-centered modes of instruction, or even those which concentrate on relationships and the learning that occurs in small groups, known as de-centered learning (Loreman, in press; Rinaldi, 2006). Clough (1988) calls for a reformed curriculum broad enough to suit the needs of students with a wide range of disabilities. Clough sees ‘special education’ as primarily a curriculum problem and argues “...that it is only through a greater understanding of the curriculum that we may hope to break through to an understanding of individual problems (p. 327).” This sort of view has led to the notion of ‘universal curriculum design’ which according to Blamires (1999) operates under three principles which are:

- 1) Provide multiple representations of content
- 2) Provide multiple options for expression and control.
- 3) Provide multiple options for engagement and motivation

Teachers today are encouraged or required to either informally modify curriculum, or do so this formally through an Individual Program Plan (see Alberta Learning, 2004). While modification of curriculum to suit the individual student with a disability is a widely accepted practice, it does have its critics. Critics view this type of process as a means of singling out as 'other' and marginalising people with disabilities in order to exercise control over them through special programs (Corbett, 1993; Danforth, 1997; Evans & Vincent, 1997). It is also criticised for presenting students with disabilities with too prescriptive a curriculum. Such a tightly constructed plan of learning is seen by critics as leaving little opportunity for a student to direct his or her own learning, and, as a result, the instruction becomes teacher centred (Goodman, 1993). Individualised goals frequently focus on specific skills rather than cognitive aspects of learning (Collet-Klingenberg & Chadsey-Rusch, 1991; Goodman, 1993; Weisenfeld, 1987). Often these skills are applicable to only a limited number of situations. There is some evidence to suggest that narrow skill development such as this is the overriding focus of the curriculum for children without disabilities (Collet-Klingenberg & Chadsey-Rusch, 1991; Goodman & Bond, 1993; Loreman, 2001; Loreman et al. 2005). It is important that curriculum modification and adaptation not be seen as only changing the skill level of the material. Of course, modification can mean this, but changing the skill level of the material to be taught should be viewed as the final option to try after other adaptations (such as the use of technology or additional human or other resources) have been fully considered. For some children (for example, those with visual impairments only, or similar disabilities) modifying the skill level of the material to be taught would be entirely inappropriate.

Pedagogy is also critical to all learning, and especially in an inclusive environment. Curriculum is what needs to be taught, and pedagogy refers to how the material is to be learned. Teachers need to think about such pragmatic considerations such as grouping. Grouping based on perceived ability levels is to be avoided, even that which the teacher thinks is relatively well disguised. Children know who is in the 'low' group and the stigma associated with this will likely have a negative impact on self image of the children in the 'low' group. Secondly, this practice is hard to justify in terms of learning. Children benefit academically and socially from heterogeneous grouping (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Loreman et al. 2005). Similarly, teachers need to be flexible in their scheduling. If children are excited about their social studies project leading up to recess, it might be wise to continue with the project after recess and re-schedule the conflicting math for another time. Obviously, elementary school teachers will find this easier to do than their counterparts in the higher grades, pointing once again to the need for schedule reform at this level (Bauer & Brown, 2001; Loreman et al, 2005).

Other more important considerations include the philosophical approach taken by the teacher. Is a social constructivist approach going to be implemented? Will there be an emphasis on inductive or deductive learning? Will collaborative instruction be used? Will Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences be taken into account? Will there be an emphasis on skills, strategies, and

aptitudes as opposed to remembering facts? An Australian survey by Loreman (2001) found that the majority of secondary school teachers rely heavily on expository teaching styles. This approach to instruction for students with disabilities is regarded as not effective, especially if used all the time (Falvey, Givner, & Kimm, 1996). Indeed, the use of a variety of non-traditional teaching techniques when teaching students with disabilities is widely advocated in the literature (Falvey et al., 1996; Foreman, 1996; Jorgensen, 1998). The cause of inclusion, and the general quality of education, will be improved if teachers consider their philosophical point of view, and adapt their teaching techniques to be more in line with research on best practices.

Pillar five: Community involvement.

There is wide agreement in the literature that the involvement of the community in schools is an important element in the success of inclusive education. Elkins (2005) argues that schools have to a large extent become disconnected from our fractured modernist society, and greater connection between school and the community is called for. Not only should schools be reaching out and becoming more involved in the local community (as they do in Reggio Emilia: see Reggio Children, 1999), but the community should also be welcomed into schools in very concrete ways. Elkins imagines schools where social service providers and similar groups aimed at the youth demographic are housed in the school building and interact with the school population to create greater social cohesion and connection.

The most important group in the wider school community are parents. Indeed, it could be argued that they are not part of the wider community at all, but rather part of the ‘core’ school community along with educators and students. Without the cooperation and help of parents little is accomplished, and Turnbull & Turnbull (1991) followed by Loreman et al. (2005) and have presented the role of parents as falling into three broad categories. These include:

1. Parents as decision makers. Parents are well placed to make decisions with, and/or on behalf of their children. They can also assist others to make decisions by providing valuable background information and insights from their years of experience with the child.
2. Parents as teachers. Parents are often their child’s only teachers in their first 4-5 years of life, and are well in-tuned to the learning needs and preferences of the individual. Parents can help as teachers both at home, in the community, and as partners in the classroom.
3. Parents as advocates. It is extremely rare and unlikely to encounter a parent who does not want the best for their child. Given this, parents are often wonderful advocates. Educators who recognize this are well on the road to a productive and collaborative relationship with parents.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide detailed descriptions of and guidelines for the multiplicity of roles parents can play in schools and classrooms, and this area is well documented in the literature already. Aside from Loreman et al. (2005) and Turnbull and Turnbull (1991), an excellent overview not only of the roles of parents, but also the role of other members of the community and advice for working with these groups is provided by Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, and Soodak in their (2005) book entitled “Families, Professionals, and Exceptionality.”

Advocacy groups, and in the case of inclusive education this generally means disability advocacy groups, should be welcomed by educators because they play an essential role as both broad lobby groups, and as support to individuals and families (Erwin & Soodak, 1995; Soodak, 1998). Often educators become irritated with these groups because of the advocacy role, however without such groups very little progress would have been made along the road to inclusive education. They hold educators to account, and force us to re-consider and re-evaluate our views, opinions, and ways of working. These groups can also help educators with resource provision and advice. They often produce and loan valuable resources, and are willing to consult and assist where they can. Advocacy groups will continue to play an influential role in the move toward inclusive education, and will become stronger as more people with disabilities themselves become empowered and move into these advocacy roles (Abbot & McConkey, 2006).

Partnerships with other local, national, and international community organizations which operate in support but not necessarily advocacy roles can also be helpful. For example, Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) in Alberta, Canada, partners with many schools and jurisdictions to help ensure smooth transitions from both inclusive and segregated schooling to an inclusive post-school life (Persons with Developmental Disabilities, n.d.). Non-profit groups such as the Easter Seals (and many others) in North America offer a variety of important services including rehabilitation services, job training, and recreational support (Easter Seals, n.d.). Various groups focusing on specific conditions such as Autism or Down Syndrome can also provide significant support and resources in order to partner with schools and better enable the practice of inclusion. Many schools foster partnerships with these groups and others like them, and in doing so expand the responsibility for education into the community in a positive and collaborative way.

Pillar six: Meaningful reflection.

Reflection has become an increasingly important part of a good teacher's repertoire of strategies for continuous improvement. Educators need to be able to reflect and study because research-based practice is necessary if educators want to stay relevant. The value of reflection is increased when it is based on data collected through systematic observations, becoming action research (Parsons & Brown, 2002). A number of teacher tools for reflection have been devised. These include but are not limited to:

- Diaries & Journals. Loreman et al. (2005) provide a rationale and a template for the use of teacher diaries. The act of writing, they argue, provides teachers with an opportunity for deeper reflection which is not necessarily afforded to those who do not write their experiences and thoughts down. Reflective diaries also have value as a record of learning and growth.
- Previously developed surveys/indexes. There are a variety of available surveys and indexes which teachers can fill out in an attempt to gauge where they are 'at' with inclusion, and what aspects of their practice they may need to focus on. The British Index for Inclusion is an example of this, however similar adaptations and scales are widely available for use (McCombs, 2003).

- Observation sheets, rubrics etc. As with surveys and indexes, there are a number of templates for observation or rubrics for good practice which are widely available to teachers as aids to reflection (Banville & Rikarad, 2001).
- Have a colleague review plans, assessment, class structure, instruction etc. This strategy can be extremely helpful, but requires high levels of trust in one's colleague. When approached in a collegial, helpful way, a peer-review of practice and possibly even some advice can be a helpful exercise for all involved, but it does take courage (Giudici, Rinaldi & Krechevsky, 2001). If this is too frightening, another alternative is to video record lessons and review the recordings alone or with colleagues.
- Visiting the classrooms of others. This is a powerful approach to picking up helpful ideas, advice, and tips for implementation in another context, often with adaptation. Indeed, classroom 'intervisitations' can be one of the most important types of professional development educators can engage in. Teachers observing each other working in their own contexts, followed by opportunities to discuss what was (and maybe what was not) observed, can be mutually beneficial. The visitor gets to experience the richness of being temporarily immersed in a different educational setting, and the host is provided with an opportunity not only to showcase good practices, but to also engage in reflection and self-critique with the visiting teacher. Inter-classroom and inter-school professional partnerships can be fostered in this way, with the possible result being on-going professional sharing and growth.

Reflective practice is often spoken of in relation to individual teachers carrying out the sorts of activities described above, however it is important in a climate of reflection to analyze and question all aspects of the inclusive experience. This extends to schools and even school jurisdictions. This is an area where many school districts do not excel. As they try and reconcile the need for promotion (in order to attract and keep students) with the need for self-criticism and reflection, it is often the self-criticism that loses out. Take for example the province of Alberta, Canada. School districts compete with each other for students, and so a culture of self-promotion rather than self-criticism is apparent. Edmonton Public Schools promotes the 'choice' in the district (although the many 'choices' of segregated education based on disability are noticeably absent from most promotional material). The current motto of Edmonton Public Schools is 'Superb results from all students' (Edmonton Public Schools, n.d.). The Calgary Board of Education website recently bragged about its 'relentless improvement' on an accountability results report (Calgary Board of Education, n.d.). The Lethbridge School District #51 has as its motto "Building bridges to a high level of student success" (Lethbridge School District #51, n.d.). Aside from the fact that such self promotion is difficult to take seriously (superb results from *all* students?) what these districts and others like them may miss through their tightly controlled public relations campaigns is the opportunity to genuinely reflect on district practice.

There are a number of things school districts can do if they want to genuinely reflect on their practice, although they may have to live with the fact that the results, while likely to help in improving district practice, may not help them with their advertising campaigns. School districts can welcome research from outside of the district. When jurisdictions allow researchers from outside of their 'control' (such as those in universities) to conduct research, they are allowing outside observers to in some respects 'evaluate' or at least describe what is happening in a somewhat 'objective' way (Avey, van Tassell-Vaska, & O'Neill, 1997). Schools and districts

can also encourage ongoing staff education. This higher level of education may produce more critical district staff who are less prepared to accept the status quo unquestioningly (Griffiths & Weatherilt, 2006). Districts can promote the use of tools such as the British Index for Inclusion and other modified and adapted versions as a means of evaluating regional progress towards inclusion (see Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Deppeler & Harvey, 2004). They can also hold ‘town hall’ style meetings in which the community is invited to participate and provide feedback on sensitive and important district issues (Griffiths & Weatherilt, 2006). A truly reflective district would publish the results of these meetings: not all publications need to fall in the realm of self-promotion.

Pillar seven: Necessary training and resources.

For all their good intentions, many teachers feel inadequately trained to meet the demands of an inclusive classroom (Loreman & Deppeler, 2002). An Australian survey conducted by Loreman (2001) asked teachers what sort of training would be helpful to them, and the response was overwhelmingly in favour of in-class support by professionals and colleagues, possibly in combination with some school-based professional development. One positive model which would seem to support this expressed need is a university/school partnership arrangement (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Deppeler, 2006). Deppeler (2006) describes the success of a model where a cohort of teachers at a school enlisted in a Masters degree in inclusive education at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. This group provided leadership in the school, and engaged in classroom consulting and other forms of assistance with their colleagues. University professionals delivered the course content ‘on-site’ at the school after instructional hours, and the academic content was modified to be directly applicable to the situation at the school. This sort of an approach seemingly addressed the need for training to be immediately relevant to the educational context in which the teachers were working.

A perception (true or otherwise) exists that schools are inadequately resourced to meet the demands of inclusive education (Hodgkinson, 2006; Loreman, 2001). It is difficult for school systems to share resources between an ‘inclusion model’ and a ‘segregation model’ and to expect to adequately support both. Inclusive education needs to be supported, and resources which were formally in place in segregated systems should be directly transferred to supporting inclusive placements, which tend to be cheaper to maintain anyway (for example see Roahrig, 1993; Salisbury & Chambers, 1994; Sobsey, 2005). Indeed, moving towards an inclusive school model can be viewed as one way of attracting additional resources. As discussed above, partnerships with community organizations with a focus on promoting inclusion can result in the acquisition of additional human and material resources. These can be used to the benefit of all students. While educators may never be satisfied with the level of resources in schools, they can take heart from Ainscow and Sebba’s (1996) observation that too many resources might not be a good thing as they have a tendency to reduce a school’s capacity to think creatively.

Technology is a commonly used resource and has opened up a wealth of opportunity for many students, however it should be used judiciously (Fichten, Asuncion, Barile, Fossey, & diSimone, 2000; Goddard, 2004; Selverstone, 2003). Most technology is an expensive proposition, and if a

computer is only used for word processing it is simply an expensive pen. Assistive technology, when used well and often, is, however, an important resource which needs to be considered. Other resources listed as being helpful to schools and teachers include extra time for planning, and extra staff in the school acting as supports (Loreman, 2001). The importance of the presence of adequate resources in a school can not be dismissed. According to Huber (1998) inclusive school practices, in relation with the prioritizing of school resources, can have a powerful differential effect on the learning of all students.

Conclusion

As we move from “Why?” to the “How?” of inclusive education it is important to consider the background, contextual conditions which need to be in place to make it successful. This paper has presented seven areas which need to be considered in order to create these essential background conditions. There well may be more than seven pillars of support for inclusive education, and the identification of these seven does not preclude further identification of more ‘pillars’, however the framework outlined here should, at least, serve as a worthwhile catalyst for discussion for educators, the community, and school systems wishing to move towards a more inclusive and effective approach to education for all children.

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