

The Contribution of Facilitated Leadership to Systems Development for Greater Inclusive Practices

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Abstract

Facilitative leadership, in the context of whole school development for greater inclusive practices offers a positive contribution to the discourse of school leadership. This article presents an exploration of the development of greater inclusive practices across an early years service and an elementary school that are both adopting a whole school systems approach. The contribution of two educational leaders, one a district supervisor and one an elementary school principal in South West Florida, to the development of facilitated processes is explored in the light of best practice for effective school change. These two real life examples of the enactment of facilitated leadership in action are shared to illustrate a framework for leadership that has the potential to create systems-wide development that is sustainable. This framework includes the creation of a context for developing a common vision, shared ownership and decision-making. The use of focused questions brings in different stakeholder voices, knowledge and experience, resulting in development of consensus decision making. Leadership in school districts and in schools enacted in this facilitated way supports teachers, benefits students, and encourages system-wide change and development towards more improved inclusive opportunities for everyone.

Keywords: school leadership, facilitated leadership, inclusion, systemic development

Introduction

This article explores the contribution of a particular style of leadership, facilitative leadership, to the progress of whole school development that supports change for greater inclusive policies and practices. The authors use an ethnographic approach to present two examples of facilitative leadership in action from South West Florida, which illustrate the potential contributions and challenges for sustained whole school/systems development for greater inclusive practices. This inquiry and representation of leadership is gathered through two of the authors' work in schools with teachers as suggested by Van Maanen (2011). Inquiry of this kind is done on-site in the natural setting, providing a personal approach as the authors act as both observers and participants, and data are collected in a variety of ways over time for greater understanding (Sangasubana, 2011).

The leaders described in these two examples facilitated change by providing opportunities for others to co-create and share ownership of whole school developments in a district wide and whole school context. They did this by providing access to appropriate professional learning, supporting participation in planning and decision-making, and enabling teachers to become the enactors of change in each of the settings. Such active engagement of teachers, who are the implementers of inclusive pedagogy, is essential if inclusive practice is to be successfully realized within a whole school approach.

The article begins with an overview of key issues related to inclusive education and the relationships to whole schooling. The role of leaders is reviewed, with a focus on the contribution of facilitated leadership. The two examples of facilitated leadership in action, and the subsequent reflection on these initiatives offer an opportunity to discuss the potential contribution of facilitated leadership for whole school developments for greater inclusive policies and practices.

Inclusive Education – Where Are We?

Inclusive education recognizes all diverse learners as capable and valuable members of the same learning community (Jones, White, Fauske, & Carr, 2011). Inclusion begins when students with diverse learning needs occupy the same space in classrooms, inclusion then grows when students and teachers are supported, and thrives when the people involved commit to the principles upon which inclusion is built (Salend, 2011). Rose (2010) asserts that people's understanding of and actions towards inclusion comes from their society's traditions, and inclusive education cannot be successfully implemented without thoughtful consideration of a society's socio-economic, political, and cultural influences. This highlights the importance of paying attention to the systems that surround the context of the development of greater inclusive policies and practices.

Currently in the United States, there are two federal laws in place that address the rights of all students to an education that is appropriate, effective, and carried out in an environment that is not restrictive (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement* [IDEA], U.S. Government, 2004; *No Child Left Behind* [NCLB], U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* of 2004 has within it the mandate of the least restrictive environment, which entitles all students with disabilities to a classroom placement with other students who do not have disabilities, to the extent that is appropriate (PL 108-446, IDEA, U.S. Government, 2004, Regulations Part 300, Sec. 300.114). The *No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) secures the right of all students to an effective education that is focused on their achievement and academic success through teachers' use of practices that are based in scientific research (U.S. Department of Education 2001). The authors accept a definition of inclusion that embraces

broader socio-political factors related to:

...a worldwide phenomenon that has its roots in human and civil rights. It transcends schooling to encompass social policies and practices (Barton & Armstrong, 2007), and it transcends disability to include the many different groups of people who are marginalized and under-represented in society. The nature of the inclusive debate is dependent on philosophical perspectives, professional disciplines, fields of knowledge, and geographical issues. (Jones et al., 2011, p.8)

Inclusive Education and Whole Schooling

For an inclusive approach to education to be successful and sustainable and to cater for the needs of all learners, the process must be founded upon a whole school perspective (Forlin, 2010a). The principles of whole schooling support the learning together of all children, while aiming to ensure excellence and equity in schools (Rinaldi & Stuart, 2009). The implementation of systems change in response to policy changes has prompted schools to restructure and re-coordinate service delivery models to help all students access the general education curriculum and achieve learning outcomes in a more inclusive environment (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2010). Changes in policy have required practitioners to re-evaluate their views about classroom placement and service provision for diverse learners, and what they see as their roles as professionals in schools. To some teachers, system changes of this nature have proven to be unsteady as professional preparation has historically been segregated, not enabling special education and general education teachers to learn what each other does and how they perform (Sailor, 2010). Teachers are on the front lines of inclusive education, and hold the power to act in either a resisting or an accepting way as these developments take place in their schools and classrooms. Teachers need support during these changing times (Forlin, 2010b). Whole school initiatives that are focused upon increasing meaningful inclusive policies and practices are an ideal scenario for sustained positive school change.

Leading Schools for Systems Development: The Role for Facilitative Leadership

The role of the leader in a school is, therefore, an essential component for enabling an inclusive whole school approach to be adopted (Sharma & Desai, 2008). While traditional leadership approaches have tended to focus on one person being placed in a position of authority and responsibility, democratic methods that support collaborative modes have increasingly been seen as more effective for inclusive schools. In an autocratic approach, the leader is expected to know what to do, how to do it, and have the necessary skills, personality, and expertise, to complete the job in a top-down hierarchy. Such an approach for inclusion has been progressively disparaged in exchange for forms of leadership where responsibilities are shared (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). In order to create a culture that accepts and engages all learners, regardless of the diversity of their needs, a leader must be prepared to develop a vision that will provide the foundation for this to happen (Sharma & Desai, 2008; Fauske, 2011). According to Mullick, Deppeler, and Sharma (2012), though,

... initiatives and efforts carried out by positional leaders, principals or head teachers at school are not enough to ensure inclusive education ... leadership needs to be observed from all sources of the school environment and encourages all to play their role in leadership practice to make schools more inclusive (p. 8).

Ryndak, Reardon, Benner, and Ward (2007) discuss the important key leadership roles

needed for a school engaged in change and suggest that sustained change must begin with a common shared vision of the outcomes of a particular school development. Once this is established, a school leader needs to facilitate shared understandings and beliefs around the fundamental concepts of the change, shared ownership of the need, progressing to shared implementation and evaluation of the change. Intrinsic to a successful process of change, a school leader needs to find ways to include all constituent voices in conversations related to the emerging policy and practice developments. Ryndak et al. (2007) also discuss the need for collaboration with outside people to act as ‘critical friends’ in this complex process of evolution; to offer an objective sounding board for everyone involved in the change process. More simply put, sustained school change calls for a leader who is adept at facilitating a complex change process of policy and practice development that includes multiple constituents in an ongoing constructive way.

Undoubtedly, the way a leader leads is crucial to the success of a school, and specifically to the general productivity of the school, but in particular student performance (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Thus, the role of the school leader in facilitating change is central to enabling effective learning outcomes. This notion is very applicable to change that relates to inclusive policies and practices. A school leader can impact school change in a very positive or totally negative way (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005).

Fauske (2011) discusses schools as complex interconnected entities that demand leaders embrace systems thinking in approaches to policy and practice development. Systems approaches to change embrace a holistic view of context and pay attention to different parts of a system that come together in subtle and explicit ways to create that unique setting. One way this is enacted in schools is through Communities of Practice (CoP) or inquiry, where the whole school community is empowered to be actively involved in the ongoing development of the initiative (Darling Hammond, 2010). How a school leader guides CoP offers insights into the fundamentals of facilitative leadership. Most important is the acceptance that members of a school can synergize together and co-create the future of a school (Scharmer, 2009).

In a facilitative approach to leadership, the emphasis moves completely from a monocratic idea of leadership towards one in which the leader acts as a facilitator who guides the planning processes, but who does this by involving the people who will implement the plan in all aspects of the decision-making process. This demands a leader leads with others and spends energy focused upon nurturing an environment where constituent members can become meaningfully involved in the change process; a process that is built around achieving decisions through consensus (Wodak, Kwon, & Clarke, 2011). Facilitative leaders elicit the insights, knowledge, and wisdom from others by asking focused questions that allow others to collaboratively explore a range of options. Decisions are made by consensus involving those who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations. A facilitative inclusive leader establishes an environment conducive to providing a vision that reflects and respects the understandings of everyone and one that will sustain the engagement of all team members in pursuing their goals.

To synthesize from this brief exploration of facilitative leadership there are particular leadership elements that influence how leaders may work to create sustained systems wide development. These are:

- creation of a context for developing a shared vision;
- creation of a context for shared ownership of development;
- development of processes for shared decision making;
- the use of focused questions to bring in different voices, knowledge and experience; and
- development of consensus decision making.

Stories of Facilitative Leadership in Action

The following examples shared by two of the authors, present first hand experiences of facilitative leadership in action; one is at a school district level and the other at a whole school level. Each story begins with a statement and question, which highlights the context of the facilitative leadership example. In the first instance, the author adopted the role of critical friend to a district wide initiative where the leader distributed leadership for enactment of an early years service provision change to greater inclusive practice. In the second example, the author adopted the role as teacher leader in a school wide trans-disciplinary initiative becoming both the recipient and leader of facilitated leadership.

Facilitated Leadership at the District Level: Supporting Blended Early Years Classrooms

“What an opportunity...to participate with a school district to work with a group of committed teachers to help them to become the leaders of inclusion in their Pre-Kindergarten schools. How can we manage the careful balance between equipping them as agents of change while struggling with the reality of their practice?” (Phyllis Jones, 2012)

A school district in South West Florida made a change in their early year's provision for children with disabilities. The change heralded a move from segregated special education provision for young children with disabilities to a blended provision where each early year's classroom had 50% children with disabilities and 50% children who were classed as typically developing. For many staff and teachers of the early year's classrooms in the district, this reflected a major paradigmatic and pedagogical change.

Although the director of special services was the main instigator of this change, the intent from the outset was to nurture the involvement of others across the district to co-create the provision of greater inclusive practices for children in their early year's settings. The district leader brought in an outside critical friend for the project, a university professor with experience supporting system development for greater inclusive policies and practices. Initial discussions revealed that there was a group of eight teachers currently in the district who had previously demonstrated very positive attitudes to including students with disabilities into their classrooms and who currently held specialist teacher support positions in the district. In their current roles they worked across early years settings within the district supporting the inclusion of children with mild to moderate support needs. The change in policy would include support for children with more significant and complex disabilities. A decision was made to invite the selected teachers to become members of a district wide CoP, led by the critical friend, that focused upon how the selected teachers could become enactors of the district wide change. It was agreed from the outset that the critical friend would:

- create and nurture a new district wide CoP for a group of teachers committed to developing and supporting more meaningful inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities;
- offer ongoing support in the area of identifying best practices for including young children with disabilities in classrooms with their typically developing peers;
- offer ongoing support in the area of coaching other teachers in the district who taught in the newly developed inclusive classrooms;
- offer ongoing support to the group of teachers in relation to problem solving, creating solutions and managing conflict; and

- offer district wide professional learning that would compliment the work of the group of teachers.

The CoP was established through a series of whole day meetings between the group of selected teachers and the critical friend to the initiative. This relationship continued for two years.

At the outset, the vision of the district leader who was the director for exceptional student education in the early years, was shared and served to frame the work of the group. The district leader was continually updated on developments of the group and was actively involved in strategic district level management of initiatives and issues that emerged from the group. During the first meeting, the group identified their hopes, dreams, strengths, and needs for the CoP and their developing roles in the district. A brief outline of subsequent activities was drafted.

The group decided to establish a series of professional learning activities designed to explore understandings of inclusion, the building of their coaching skills, and modeling how to lead a CoP. The initial exploration around concepts of inclusion supported the development of a shared vision for the project and was a vital stage in defining the identity of the CoP. Through this process, teachers decided a strong focus should be upon how they could lead and support other classroom teachers to enable the successful participation of young children with disabilities in early year's settings across the district. The development of coaching skills that underpinned the work in the CoP was influenced by the work of Carr, Herman, and Harris (2005) where coaching is seen as a structured facilitative process that builds skills in active listening, modeling, open, and focused questioning. This formed a strong foundation for the modeling of the work of Wenger White, Smith, & Rowe (2005) where attention is paid to the process of group dynamics and connections through a focused shared topic.

From the beginning of the initiative, the group of teachers knew that support was going to be ongoing and sustained for their work in the CoP for at least two years. The nature of this support evolved over the two years of the project. Initially, this focused upon building the CoP, capacity building for the teachers to be leaders of best practices in inclusive education, building their coaching skills, and up skilling them on problem solving, creating solutions and managing conflict. As the CoP became more established, the support became more focused upon current issues and initiatives the teacher leaders were experiencing across the district. Very quickly, the teachers bonded through a shared vision and mission and became each others strongest supports.

Through the CoP project, the teachers were paired up by locality and together they created and led four smaller CoP's in their part of the district. Each of these followed a similar structure that the selected teachers collaboratively planned for, with between 12-15 teachers in each of the smaller CoP. The selected teachers wanted to lead a discussion of inclusion with the classroom teachers. They themselves shared that they had benefited from such a discussion. They realized the many different interpretations of inclusion and the value of nurturing a shared vision for the CoP to increase the meaningful inclusion of young children with disabilities. The smaller CoP's met once monthly but district teachers visited classrooms and offered onsite one-on-one support throughout the month. During the district CoP, strategies for facilitation were modeled and included how to structure a meeting to increase involvement of all in decision making and the power of consensus building in the shared commitment of a group (Brown, 2008).

The critical friend led a series of six district wide professional learning workshops in response to issues raised by classroom teachers in the smaller groups. These workshops covered content related to understandings of autism, differentiating the early year's

curriculum, supporting social and emotional development, classroom management, supporting positive behavior, and working with children with more significant disabilities to meaningfully participate in the early years setting. Informal verbal feedback by classroom teachers during these sessions suggested that they felt involved in the planning of the CoP and also supported in their initiatives to successfully include children with disabilities who were new to their class. The district leader maintained an active interest in the group while supporting them to develop a shared ownership of the initiative.

During the second year of the project, the critical friend visited six classrooms across the district to see inclusion in action and offer feedback to teachers about increasing children's involvement in classroom activities. During these visits, teachers embraced their new children, many of whom demonstrated different learning strengths, needs and preferences to those the teachers had experienced before. Across all six visits all activities in classrooms were planned for all children to be actively involved.

Ongoing informal verbal and email feedback from the specialist teachers about the district wide CoP was extremely positive. First of all, all the specialist teachers felt supported in their endeavors and perceived their knowledge and skills in leading meaningful inclusive practices for young children to be enhanced. The project proved to be very successful in supporting classroom teachers to include more students with more complex disabilities in their classrooms. The initial intent to create more inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities to be included in early education experiences with their typically developing peers was successfully accomplished. For example, through district data collection, in the 2006-2007 school year, 38% of 1134 children with disabilities in 102 classrooms were served in full time inclusion. This developed in the 2009-2010 school year to 73.48% of 1198 students with disabilities (including students with labels of more complex disabilities) being served in full inclusion classrooms (Smith, Erikson, & Locascio, 2010). This increase in numbers represents more students who have more complex disabilities. This project proved successful in creating a context for the specialist teachers to create a district wide shared vision for meaningful participation of children with more complex disabilities in more inclusive early years learning opportunities. Through the CoP, facilitated by an outside expert who acted as a critical friend, the teachers were able to generate an action plan for translating this vision to classroom practice across the district. The specialist teachers adopted a support model for teachers in the district by creating smaller and more local CoP's for classroom teachers who were engaged in including children with disabilities into their early year's classrooms. The specialist teachers were instrumental in developing these to respond to the local needs of teachers and to share decision making in those classrooms. During the initial phases of the district wide CoP, district specialist teachers asked for mentor training and development that involved how they could model consensus building and use different questioning styles to engage as many of the classroom teachers' voices and experiences as possible.

Facilitated Leadership at the School Level: Transdisciplinary Team

"I was committed to the philosophy of inclusive education but taught in a school with segregated classrooms. Education research, public policy, and the law were promoting inclusive education yet the traditional way my school was structured presented a barrier to developing inclusive opportunities for students. As a veteran teacher in a self-contained PreKindergarten/Kindergarten class for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder I was given the opportunity to lead the school wide Trans-disciplinary Team. As the leader of our school's team, how was I able to collaborate with others and facilitate change to support the development of more meaningful inclusive opportunities for students across the school?"
Ann Gillies, 2012.

At a public elementary school in Florida, U.S. a teacher who worked with students with disabilities for eight years volunteered to lead her school's Trans-disciplinary Team of 32 professionals because she wanted to facilitate change within the school and she wanted to have a stronger influence on the practice of inclusive education. The school served over 750 children with 13 self-contained classrooms on the campus designated for students with disabilities serving a total of about 130 students. The school also had ten students with disabilities who were fully included in general education classrooms. The team comprised of ten special educators, two general educators, 11 teaching assistants, two speech/language pathologists, three therapists, and four administrators. As the leader, the teacher organized weekly hour-long meetings throughout the ten-month school year. The purpose of the weekly meetings was to provide access to professional learning to support everyone's participation in planning for the students with disabilities, and to support all practitioners as they changed and improved their teaching.

The use of weekly team meetings to facilitate change in the school was first developed then consistently supported by the school principal. The principal and the teacher leader met frequently throughout the year to discuss the weekly meetings, set the agenda, and brainstorm future goals for the team and the school. This first level of facilitative leadership at the school level, via the principal, helped to create and maintain an environment for shared ownership of the development of more inclusive experiences for the students. During the weekly meetings the focus was on areas including best teaching practices, lesson planning, accountability, and child development. Meeting agenda items included peer-mediated instruction, direct instruction, adapting and modifying the curriculum, data collection, behavior modification, and social skills.

The second level of facilitated leadership, at the Trans-disciplinary Team level, was the teacher leader's responsibility. Through planning group discussions with focused questions, planning cooperative projects to share everyone's experience, and distributing leadership by asking team members to present on pertinent topics of their choice, a context for developing a shared vision for the school was created. The team's vision changed from one focused on services provided only in self-contained settings, to one that placed more value on the experiences students with and without disabilities shared in inclusive environments. The team developed a greater appreciation for inclusive experiences and were committed to improving practice to support this new vision.

Team members were asked to share their perspectives on each of the weekly topics throughout the year and all became critical friends; listening, supporting, appreciating, and encouraging one another. Many after school hours were dedicated to sharing and celebrating success stories from teaching, as the segregated nature of classrooms and schedules did not allow much time together during the school day. The team met after school every Tuesday, for one hour throughout the entire school year from August to June. Many stories shared were about inclusive opportunities that the students with disabilities took part in and hearing about these successes also facilitated change in placement opportunities. For example, at the onset of the school year, three classrooms for students with disabilities were involved in programs that brought students with and without disabilities together; by the end of the school year, three more classrooms had developed similar programs.

One of the most powerful ways change among the team was facilitated was by ensuring that different voices were heard through presentations and discussions led by individual team members. An advantage of listening to the voices of practitioners who engaged their students in inclusive experiences was hearing their positive attitudes and certainty about the significance of the experiences. During discussions and within presentations, practitioners described the work that went into the organization of the inclusive experiences, why they wanted to develop such an experience, and how they made inclusion a valuable learning

opportunity. Through these discussions, barriers to inclusive educational experiences were identified, problems discussed, issues resolved, success celebrated, and new ideas generated. Within this tight-knit team, teachers were able to voice their concerns and fears, share their excitement and achievements, and receive support from each other as they expanded and changed their thinking and practice.

As a result of the facilitated leadership of the principal and the teacher leader, there were increasingly more programs and strategies in place at the elementary school that enabled students with and without disabilities to spend more quality time together. Success was evident in the increase of the number of classrooms participating in inclusive programs; from three to six classrooms, and in the improvement of teachers' attitudes about acceptance and belonging of students with disabilities in the whole school community. Teachers of students with disabilities reached out to general education teachers and creatively developed activities for both students with and without disabilities to share. They worked collaboratively to find times during the day for students to spend together and committed to a consistent schedule of time spent together. Many different inclusive programs were developed including cross-age tutoring in reading, peer buddies on the playground, peer-mediated instruction during the math block, and helpers in the lunch room. The frequent team meetings created a context for practitioners to develop a shared vision towards more inclusive education as well as a context for shared ownership of the development of more opportunities for students. The way in which the team meetings were structured, so every member's voice was heard, developed a process for shared and consensual decision making among the group. The use of focused questions during team meetings brought in different voices, along with each team members' specialized knowledge and unique experience.

The six teachers on the Trans-disciplinary Team who developed inclusive opportunities for their students during the year all shared their positive personal feelings during team meetings and all six teachers were planning to continue their programs for the next school year, 2012-2013. The principal of this school stayed involved and scheduled monthly follow-up meetings with the teacher leader to stay current with the programs' progress. What began through facilitative leadership from a principal and as a commitment from a couple of teachers at this school towards more inclusive education, became a team effort of many to work in their day-to-day practices to develop more inclusive opportunities for all of the school's children.

Reflection

The two examples described here echo elements of facilitative leadership aimed at increasing inclusive practices across a school district and within an elementary school. Both were successful in having a positive influence in moving inclusive practices beyond the sharing of space of students with and without disabilities, towards the valuing of all students as significant members of the same learning communities (Rinaldi & Stuart, 2009; Jones et al., 2011); This was achieved at the school district level by supporting classroom teachers to actively include children with disabilities in their early years classrooms. At the elementary school level inclusion was supported by increasing the number of self-contained classrooms involved in inclusive programs. In both examples, the teachers not only opened their classroom doors to other children but actively explored ways to improve the participation of all children in shared activities.

These examples of facilitative leadership demonstrate how a school leader can support sustained change by providing access to appropriate professional learning for practitioners. The district and school leaders in this article provided opportunities for others to co-create and share ownership of whole school developments towards more inclusive education (Scharmer, 2009). In both examples, teachers of students with and without disabilities

shared professional learning experiences, which respond to the concerns of Sailor (2010) that professional learning is often segregated and does not lead to the shared knowledge of roles and responsibilities. One of the main foci of this article is the role of facilitated leadership in sustained school or district change. In each of the examples, there was a level of distributed leadership from administration. Each example reflects the willingness of the administrators to engage in facilitated leadership to nurture school and district developments that ultimately impact how children with disabilities are viewed and included. It is worthwhile to revisit the examples in respect to identified facilitated leadership elements established earlier in this article. These are how the initiatives lead the creation of a context for developing a shared vision; the creation of a context for shared ownership of development; the development of processes for shared decision making; the use of focused questions to bring in different voices, knowledge and experiences; and the development of consensus decision making.

Creation of a Context for Developing a Shared Vision

The creation of a context for developing a shared vision at the school district level was explained in the first example through the description of the developments of the district wide and smaller CoP's (Darling Hammond, 2010). Time and energy was allotted to sharing understandings of inclusion for young children with disabilities in general education early years settings. Time was also given to negotiating a vision for the purpose of the CoP's (Scharmer, 2009). Establishing this at the beginning nurtured a shared vision among participants that underpinned subsequent developments of the CoP. Likewise, in the elementary school, as explained in the second example, a context for developing a shared vision among 32 professionals was created through the development of a Trans-disciplinary Team that met weekly throughout the school year and was supported by the school principal and the teacher leader.

Creation of a Context for Shared Ownership of Development

The creation of a context for shared ownership at the school district level CoP was achieved through the way the meetings were structured and led following the model of CoP implementation influenced by the work of Wenger et al. (2005). The creation of a context for shared ownership of development at the elementary school level was achieved through the principal meetings with the Trans-disciplinary Team teacher leader, and the teacher leader meeting weekly with her fellow teachers and therapists to develop more inclusive opportunities for students.

Development of Processes for Shared Decision Making

Evident in the first example of the school district level was the development of processes for shared decision making in each CoP. Classroom teachers had opportunities to influence monthly meeting agendas and topics and also asked for and informed district wide workshops. This meant that they were participating in professional learning that was meaningful to their own practice. Evident in the second example of the elementary school was the development of processes for shared decision making by ensuring all Trans-disciplinary Team members had a voice during the weekly team meetings. By structuring meetings to encourage discussions that were led by different team members each week, each member had a chance to voice his or her opinion and actively participate in important decision making affecting individual students and the entire department for students with disabilities.

The Use of Questioning

At the school district level, questioning formed an integral part of the work the district

teachers engaged in as they built up their own coaching skills and how they led the smaller CoP's. The positive power of open questioning and active listening was established at the outset and returned to many times during the district wide meetings. Specialist teachers talked about how their use of open questioning was particularly important as they managed conflict that arose in the smaller CoP and their commitment to bring in different voices and knowledge into discussions. At the elementary school level, the use of focused questions to bring in different voices, knowledge, and experience was realized by the development of the questions by the principal and the Trans-disciplinary Team teacher leader, and the structure of the team meetings that allowed different members to lead discussions each week. During the discussions, team members voiced their opinions, shared their knowledge, and described their experience in relation to focused questions that gave all team members a wealth of information to think about and reflect upon.

Development of Consensus Decision Making

The specialist teachers responded very well to the consensus building approach that they experienced in the district wide CoP and the smaller CoP's that they subsequently led. The focus on consensus building proved successful in nurturing teams where the focus was upon everyone having a say in a discussion and the value of negotiating a shared decision that everyone in the group can successfully work with. The development of consensus decision making was described at the elementary school level through the way the team collaboratively worked and problem-solved in weekly meetings and then the results were shared with the school principal. The principal also followed up with the teacher leader and individual teachers throughout the school year.

Conclusion

The systematic creation of a context for developing a shared vision and ownership, the development of processes for shared decision making through consensus, and the use of focused questions to bring in different voices, knowledge, and experience came together to cultivate an environment that nurtured sustained systemic change. In the school district, the district leader demonstrated trust with a group of eight specialist teachers to enact a vision for greater inclusive practices for young children with disabilities. She supported the change from a systems perspective, building capacity across the district through a district wide CoP, thus influencing many school settings (Fauske, 2011). In doing this, the group of specialist teachers developed their knowledge, skills, and confidences to not only become enactors of change themselves, but to also lead others to become change agents.

In the elementary school, the principal trusted the teacher leader of the Trans-disciplinary Team to support practitioners in improving and developing their practice to establish more inclusive opportunities for the school's children. The school principal stayed connected to, and continually supported, the teacher leader and the team of practitioners as they all developed shared decision making and a shared ownership of a more inclusive educational program at their school. The examples shared in this article reveal how through a facilitated leadership approach, practitioners at all levels can become more involved in the creation of a shared vision and shared decision making in whole school developments for greater inclusive practices.

The process of facilitative leadership supported practitioners to be enactors of change for the development of new inclusive programs in classrooms and across schools. The district administrator and school principal offered different examples of how they delegated responsibility in their approaches to facilitating change. The district administrator enrolled the support of a critical friend (Ryndak et al., 2007) whilst the school principal delegated the leadership role to a teacher leader in the school with both administrators ensuring regular feedback sessions (Scharmer, 2009). Both of these approaches were successful in establishing more inclusive whole school practices that responded to the diversity of local contexts. The need for flexibility of approaches to facilitative leadership that is sensitive to a specific setting and involves stakeholders at all levels would seem paramount to enacting effective inclusive schooling.

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