

"All Born In-Schools as a  
Reflection of our Community,  
Reaching and Teaching Every  
Child!"

April 23, 2016

Keynote

All Born "In" 2016

Portland, Oregon

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Dr. Richard A. Villa has worked with thousands of teachers and administrators throughout North America and the world, to develop and implement organizational and instructional support systems for educating all students within general education settings. Rich has been a middle and high school classroom teacher, special educator, special education coordinator, pupil personnel services director, and director of instructional services. In addition to working with schools, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and advocacy organizations, Rich has authored over a hundred articles and book chapters regarding inclusive education, differentiated instruction, collaborative planning and co-teaching, and school restructuring. Dr. Villa has co-edited seventeen books and developed three multi-media kits for teachers, administrators, and parents. Possessing the conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills required to work effectively with others and facilitate change and progress in education, he has presented at numerous national and international conferences, and is known for his enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and humorous style of presenting.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Inclusion:**

- Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2016). *The Inclusion Checklist: A Self-Assessment of Quality Inclusive Education Practices*. Naples, FL: National Professional Resources.
- Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2011). *RTI: Co-Teaching and Differentiated Instruction*. National Professional Resources. (800) 453-7461
- Villa, R. Thousand, J., & Nevin, A. (2010). *Collaborating with Students in Instruction and Decision Making*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (800) 818-7243
- Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Creating an Inclusive School*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (800) 933-2723
- Thousand, J. & Villa, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Creativity and Collaborative Learning: The Practical Guide to Empowering Students, Teachers, and Families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes. (800) 638-3775
- Villa, R. & Thousand, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: Piecing the Puzzle Together (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes. (800) 638-3775

### **Differentiated Instruction:**

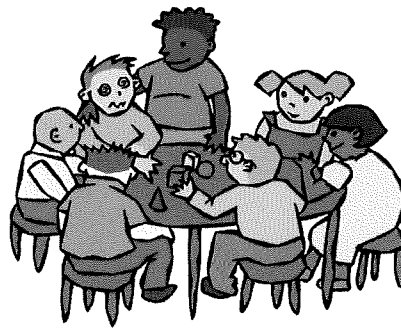
- Thousand, J., Villa R., & Nevin, A. (2015). *Differentiated instruction: Planning for Universal Design and Teaching for College and Career Readiness (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (800) 818-7243.
- Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2011). *RTI: Co-Teaching and Differentiated Instruction*. National Professional Resources. (800) 453-7461

### **Co-Teaching:**

- Villa, R., Thousand, J., & Nevin, A. (2013). *A Guide to Co-Teaching: New Lessons and Strategies to Facilitate Student Learning (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. . (800) 818-7243
- Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2011). *RTI: Co-Teaching and Differentiated Instruction*. National Professional Resources. (800) 453-7461
- Villa, R. Thousand, J., & Nevin, A. (2010). *Collaborating with Students in Instruction and Decision Making*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (800) 818-7243
- Nevin, A., Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators Practical Tips for K-12 Educator*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (800) 818-7243
- Villa, R., Thousand, J., & Nevin, A. (2008). *A Guide to Co Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Students Learning (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. . (800) 818-7243
- Villa, R., Thousand, J., & Nevin, A. (2008). *Co-Teaching: A Multimedia Kit for Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (800) 818-7243
- Villa, R. (2002). *Collaborative Planning: Transforming Theory into Practice*. National Professional Resources. (800) 453-7461
- Villa, R. (2002). *Collaborative Teaching: The Co-Teaching Model*. National Professional Resources. (800) 453-7461

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

- ❖ Access to Education for All
- ❖ Home-School Partnership
- ❖ Fiscal Commitment
- ❖ Development & Refinement of Instruction, Curricular, Assessment & Discipline Approaches
- ❖ Emphasis on Early Intervention & Transition



Inclusive Education is:

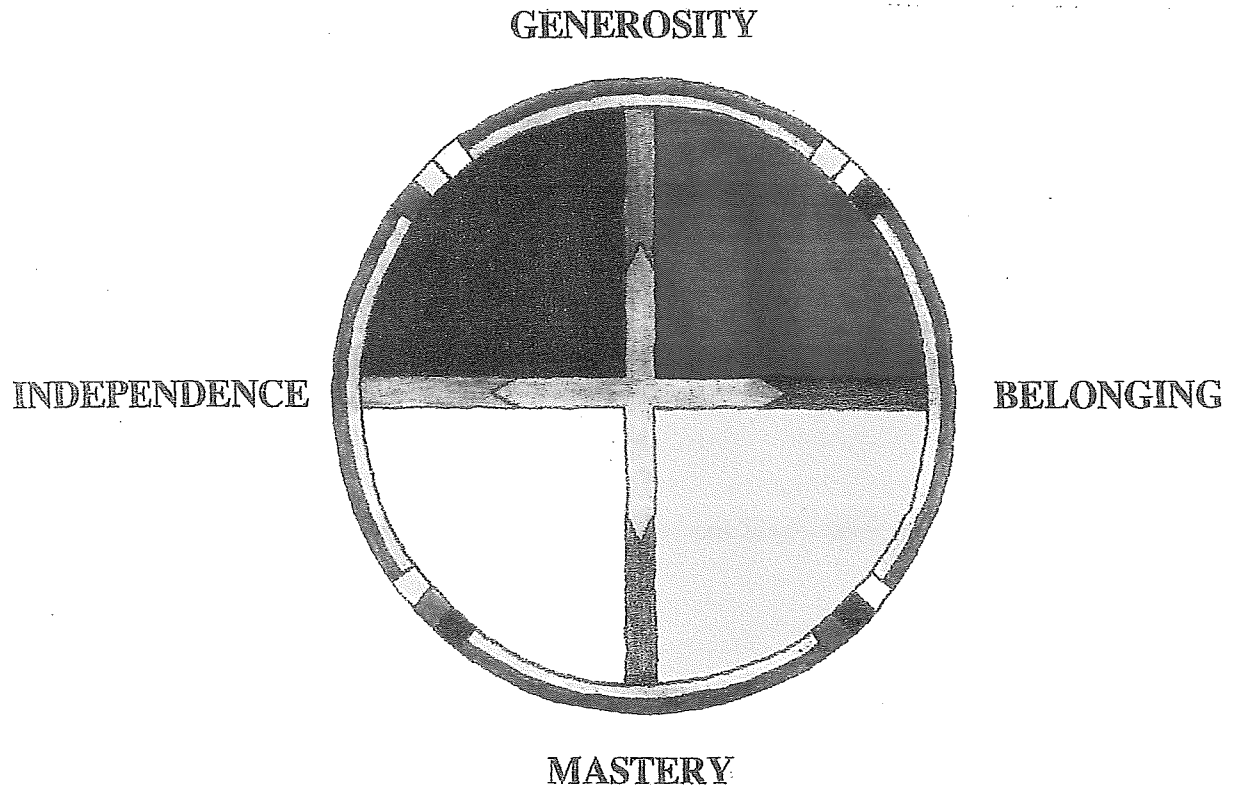
Inclusive Education is not:

# Characteristics of Schools Fully and Successfully Implementing Inclusive Education

Ten national educational associations (i.e., National Association of State Directors of Special Education, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Council of Great City Schools, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, National State Boards of Education, Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association, and American Federation of Teachers) identified the characteristics of schools fully and successfully implementing inclusive school practices (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995):

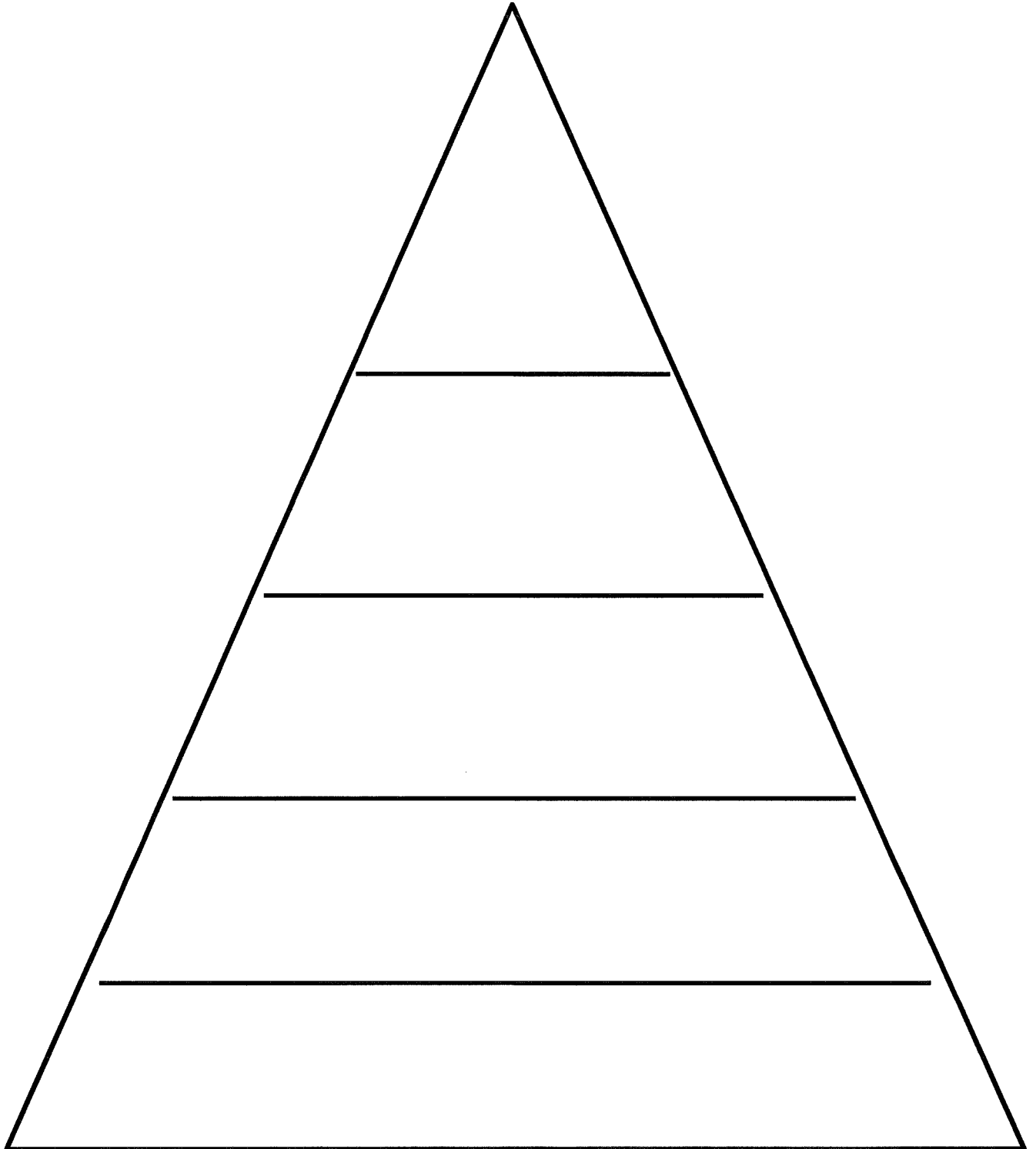
- Diversity is valued and celebrated;
- The principal plays an active and supportive leadership role;
- All students work toward the same educational outcomes based on high standards;
- There is a sense of community in which everyone belongs, is accepted and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community;
- There is an array of services;
- Flexible groupings, authentic and meaningful learning experiences and developmentally appropriate curricula are accessible to all students;
- Research based instructional strategies are used, and natural support networks are fostered across students and staff;
- Staff have changed roles that are more collaborative;
- There are new forms of accountability;
- There is access to necessary technology and physical modifications and accommodations;  
and
- Parents are embraced as equal partners.

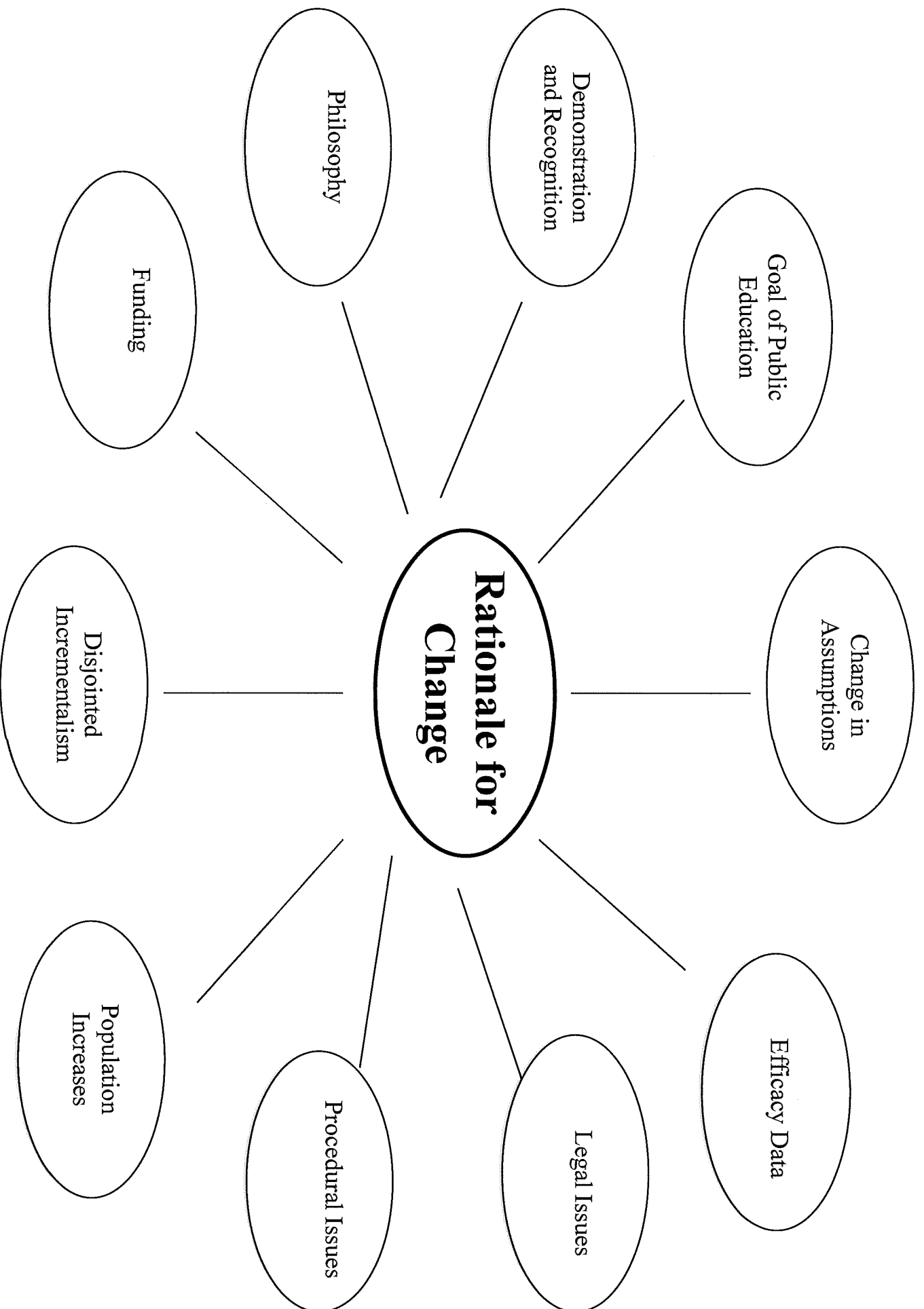
# CIRCLE OF COURAGE



From: Brendtro, L.K., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs







## Reasons for the Intractability of Schools

- Inadequate Teacher Preparation
- Inappropriate Organizational Structures, Policies, Practices, & Procedures
- Inadequate Attention to Creating New Cultures
- Leadership that is Naïve or Cowardly
- Perfected a model to discard evidence of ineffectiveness

## Organizational Strategies Supportive of Inclusionary Schools

### *Promoting An Inclusive Vision*

Inclusion is welcoming, valuing, empowering and supporting the diverse academic and social learning of all students in shared environments and experiences for the purpose of attaining the goals of education.

“What are the goals of Public Education?”

# Why Inclusion?

*Why bringing special education and general education students together is a good thing.*

by Richard A. Villa and  
Jacqueline S. Thousand

*"We will never successfully restructure schools to be effective until we stop seeing diversity in our children as a problem."*

Grant Wiggins

There are many reasons for creating and maintaining inclusive schools. Here, we'll explore 10 rationales for such schools, and we invite you to decide which are most meaningful to you and which might be significant to other stakeholders, such as policy-makers, school board members, administrators, general education teachers, special educators, parents and students.

## **The Goal of Public Education**

For some, the rationale for changing

the organization of schooling comes out of an explicit examination of the goals of public education and the realization that those goals go beyond academics and are the same for all children. We have had the opportunity to ask thousands of people in the U.S. and elsewhere to identify the education's goals. What is notable is that regardless of the divergent perspectives, vested interests or locale of the people queried, their responses are very similar and tend to fall into one or more of the four components of the Lakota Native American Circle of Courage, as identified by researchers: *belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.*

Historically, "special education" practices often have unintentionally interfered with students' opportunity to experience facets of the Circle of

Courage. For instance, in an effort to foster students' skill development and *independence*, we have sent them to "specialized" instruction in separate environments. While it is important for students to develop skills, it is difficult for them to get the message that they *belong* when they're sent down the hall or to a different school to develop those skills. Most every theory of motivation stresses the fulfillment of a child's need to belong as critical, if not prerequisite, to a child's motivation to learn. Exclusion or removal of a child from general education, on the other hand, tells the child that belonging is not forthcoming -- that it is something that must be earned. Removal signals to a child, "I am not good enough to belong as I am. But if I acquire some unknown number of skills maybe I will be

granted the privilege of belonging."

### Changing Assumptions

Few would deny that the world our students are entering today is dramatically different from the pre-Internet, pre-electronic mail, pre-cell phone and pre-videogame days of previous decades. We're in the midst of an information explosion. The rate of new technological discoveries, cooperative international businesses, and societal trends combined with the exponential growth and change in what is "accurate" knowledge has led to a situation where no one can possibly keep abreast of all there is to know. This is in contrast with 19th- and 20th-century life and the assumptions regarding the role of schooling, which was to prepare most for farm and factory work, sort out the elite for continuing education, and induct and homogenize arriving immigrants into an English-speaking, predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture.

Given the complexity of 21st-century adult life, assumptions that drove the curricular, instructional, assessment and organizational practices of schooling in the past have changed. Today's schooling must be based upon new assumptions about our global, multicultural and multilingual society and the skills, attitudes and dispositions for success in such a society. What skills do our children need to acquire to adjust to these changes? Educators and employers alike identify such traits such as communication, creative problem-solving, interpersonal skills, the ability to access and evaluate information, and the ability to cope with adversity and uncertainty, as well as to appreciate and collaborate with the diverse people of this global community. The heart of this 21st-century curriculum is learning how to learn—how to be a lifelong inquirer—rather than momentarily learning correct facts or a routine for the assembly line or fields.

To deliver this curriculum requires trying new ways of teaching (e.g., dif-

ferentiation of instruction, cooperative group learning, active student-directed learning, a focus on social skill and communication competence along with academics, community service) that have been proven to better meet unique student needs. When student diversity rather than homogeneity is the reigning assumption, it is possible to accelerate the transformation of schooling practices and better prepare every student for the future, which is already here.

### Efficacy Data

As early as the 1980s, research showed that separate special education services had little to no positive effects for students, regardless of the intensity or type of their disabilities. In one 1994 research review of effective special education settings, researchers concluded that "special-needs students educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings." This held true regardless of the type of disability or grade level.

Later, the U. S. Department of Education reported that "across a number of analyses of post-school results, the message was the same: those who spent more time in regular education experienced better results after high school." As for students with severe disabilities, researchers found not only that their inclusion did not have adverse effects on classmates' academic or behavioral success as measured by standardized tests and report card grades, but that their inclusion enhanced classmates' as well as their own achievement, self-esteem and school attendance.

Overall, the data speak volumes. Students with disabilities acquire greater mastery of academic and social content in inclusive settings. As federal legislation acknowledges in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), "nearly 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made

more effective by having high expectations and ensuring students' access in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible...[and] providing appropriate special education and related services and aides and supports in the regular classroom to such children, whenever possible."

### Legal Issues

Since 1975's Education of All Handicapped Children Act, that law and subsequent reauthorizations (such as IDEIA) have reflected Congress' preference for educating children with disabilities in general education classrooms. What has changed is the "know-how" of teachers, administrators and communities as they create inclusive settings. This change shows in increased competence and confidence on the part of educators, together with instructional and technological advancements they have developed, to successfully educate students with diverse needs in general education.

Over the past decades, court cases have also clarified the intent of the law in favor of the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education. For example, the 1993 U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the right of Rafael Oberti, a boy with Down Syndrome, to receive his education in his neighborhood school with necessary supports, placing the burden of proof for complying with the law's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements squarely on the school district and state rather than the family. Likewise, in 1994, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld, in the *Holland v. Sacramento Unified School District* decision, that when school districts place students with disabilities, the presumption and starting point is the mainstream. More recently, in 2002, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the *Girty v. School District of Valley Grove* district court decision to continue the education of Charles "Spike" Girty, a student with moderate disabilities, in general

education. The appeals court rejected the district's contention that Spike needed a segregated placement because his educational level was significantly below that of classmates. It is noteworthy that the United States Departments of Justice and Education filed amicus briefs in both the *Holland* and *Girty* cases, arguing in favor of educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms with supplemental supports, aides and services.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, with its emphasis on disaggregation of data to examine adequate yearly progress and students being taught by teachers who are highly qualified in the content area they are teaching, is also resulting in increased numbers of students with disabilities being educated in general education classrooms. This is particularly true at the middle and high school levels where teachers who traditionally pull out students do not meet the law's "highly qualified" requirements in all the areas in which they are instructing students. The result has been a return to general education classrooms for students previously pulled out.



### **Paperwork and Procedures**

Few would disagree that paperwork dominates special education. In fact, the Vermont Department of Education has estimated that from 35 to 50 percent of special educators' time is devoted to assessment and other documentation related to student Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). Unfortunately, much of the assessment is conducted to comply with legal requirements to label and categorize students rather than gather diagnostic information to assist in instruction. Even if labels were consistently valid and reliable, there is no evidence suggesting that all children given a particular label (e.g., autism, Down Syndrome, emotional disturbance, learning disability, multiple disability, talented and gifted) learn in the same way, are motivated by the same things,

or have the same gifts or challenges. As teachers intuitively know, homogeneity among children is a myth.

Required timelines, notices of meetings, development of educational goals and comprehensive reports, and annual review of IEPs, in fact, are merely procedural "proxy" measures of actual student progress. For some—particularly special educators, parents and advocates—procedural issues such as the ones raised here have been enough to fire a call for change in an educational system that labels and segregates a vast proportion of our children based upon educationally questionable assessment instruments and monitoring procedures.

### **Population Increases**

A major concern, particularly for special educators who must assess and

serve students identified as having disabilities, is the rising number of children eligible for special education.

The Vermont Department of Education once projected that "nearly 50 percent of our students receive services from or are eligible for a variety of special programs serving students with disabilities, economic or social disadvantages, special talents, etc." Given this phenomenon, it causes some concerned citizens to ask, "Is the disability in the child, or is the disability somehow in the educational systems we have created?"

### **Disjointed Incrementalism**

There has been much discussion about our dual systems of general and special education but, in reality, we have a multiple system of education. Aside from general and special educa-

tion, there is gifted education, vocational education, English as a second language education, at-risk education, alternative education, and so on. All of these systems or programs are well-intended, but they were separately launched in a disjointed and incremental fashion; and they are delivered separately in what could be referred to as an "egg carton" service model. They each have their own eligibility criteria, funding formulas and advocacy groups that sometimes conflict with one another and, at the very least, lead to wasted resources due to poor coordination and duplication. That so many "special" programs have been created for so many children suggests the need for a unified system of education that pulls together the disjointed programs, resources, adults and children.

### Funding

Costs associated with the segregation of children can be significant in terms of dollars as well as in other human terms. When inclusive schooling was first proposed in the early 1980s, the anticipated cost of educating children with disabilities in general education was an argument against it. Since then, communities across the country have demonstrated that educating all children in general education classrooms does not necessarily cost more. In some cases, the reduction in separate busing costs and the elimination of duplicate services have saved dollars that then could be used to increase instructional resources, thus benefiting many children.

Interestingly, some opponents of inclusion have criticized the citing of potential cost savings as inappropriate and unethical. Granted, inclusion should not be "sold" for financial reasons alone; what is best for children is always the ultimate rationale for a practice. However, there is nothing wrong with being fiscally responsible. As noted in the previous section, education often has squandered its resources through poor coordination

among programs, service providers and advocacy efforts. Many communities are experiencing cutbacks in education and clearly cannot afford anything less than efficient delivery of services to children.

### Philosophy

For some, the most compelling rationale for change toward inclusive education is philosophical; that is, they believe that exclusion of any subgroup of people is a simple violation of civil rights and the principle of "equal citizenship." They see the parallel between the struggle for the inclusion of students with disabilities with the earlier struggle for human and civil rights, when school officials blocked schoolhouse doors in order to keep out African-American children. They agree with Chief Justice Earl Warren's statements in the 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision which noted that separateness in education can "generate a feeling of inferiority as to [children's] status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. This sense of inferiority ... affects the motivation of a child to learn ... [and] has a tendency to retard ... educational and mental development."

These folks know that the number one determinant of the extent to which a child with disabilities has access to regular education is where the child's family happens to live. They experience how arbitrary and unfair this situation is. They point out that to create a society in which all people are valued, we must model that society in our schooling.

### Demonstrations and Recognition

Clearly, people benefit from having examples to observe, learn from and imitate. In every state there are schools that have restructured and are implementing inclusive practices to educate an increasingly diverse student body. Inclusive education is a worldwide movement, not limited to North

America. In fact, at the 1994 UN World Conference on Special Education in Salamanca, Spain, 92 nations signed the Salamanca Statement, which in part reads, "Education for children with special needs should be provided within the general education system, which has the best potential to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, and build an inclusive society."

Recognition of a mounting momentum and an international movement in support of inclusive educational practices can have an additional influence on some people. The thinking is that, "Well, if these leaders and this mass of people consider this a viable and valuable path to take, perhaps we should consider it for our community."

### What is Most Compelling to You?

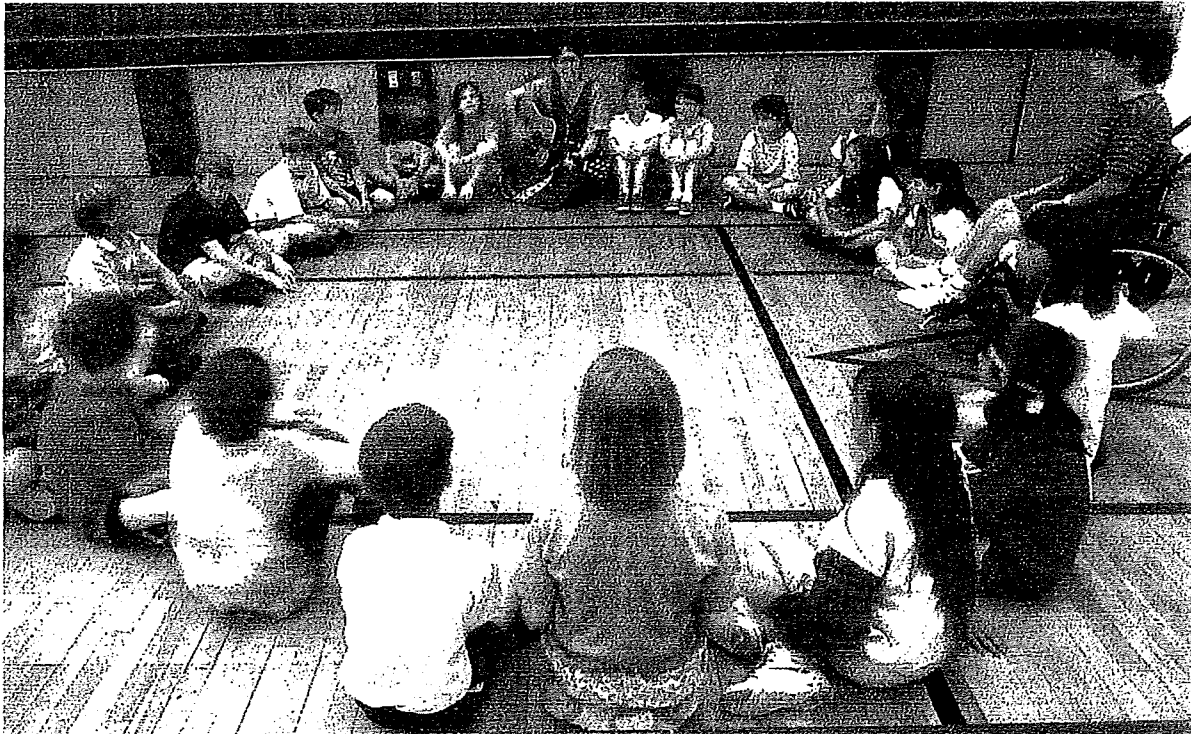
With these 10 rationales in mind, we invite you to respond to the following two questions:

Personally and professionally, which of the rationales are the most compelling to you—that is, which are most likely to lead you to reject segregation of general and special education and, instead, support a unified, inclusive educational system?

Which of the rationales would your colleagues, supervisors, students, community members and policymakers find most compelling?

Your answers to these two questions are important to your own motivation and your ability to clarify and build consensus for a vision of inclusive education among the other members of your school and greater community. And your motivation to create and maintain inclusive schools is important to the students and families that you serve and to the attainment of Circle of Courage outcomes for all of our children and youth. ❖

*Villa and Thousand are the editors of Creating an Inclusive School (ASCD, 2005).*



# Making Inclusive Education Work

*Successful implementation requires commitment, creative thinking, and effective classroom strategies.*

**Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand**

**A**s an educator, you are philosophically committed to student diversity. You appreciate that learning differences are natural and positive. You focus on identifying and capitalizing on individual students' interests and strengths. But making inclusive education work requires something more: It takes both systems-level support and classroom-level strategies.

Since the 1975 implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal law has stated that children with disabilities have the right to an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). According to the act, removal from general education environments should occur only when a student has failed to achieve satisfactorily despite documented use of supplemental supports, aids, and services.

During the past 28 years, the interpretation of what constitutes the least restrictive environment has evolved, along with schools' and educators' abilities to provide effective supports. As a result, increased numbers of students with disabilities are now served in both regular schools and general education classes within those schools.

When IDEA was first promulgated in 1975, schools generally interpreted the

law to mean that they should mainstream students with mild disabilities—for example, those with learning disabilities and those eligible for speech and language services—into classes where these students could keep up with other learners, supposedly with minimal support and few or no modifications to either curriculum or instruction. In the early 1980s, however, the interpretation of least restrictive environment evolved to include the concept of integrating students with more intensive needs—those with moderate and severe disabilities—into regular classrooms. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the interpretation evolved into the approach now known as *inclusion*: the principle and practice of considering general education as the placement of first choice for all learners. This approach encourages educators to bring necessary supplemental supports, aids, and services into the classroom instead of removing students from the classroom for those services.

As the interpretation of least restrictive environment has changed, the proportion of students with disabilities included in general education has increased dramatically. By 1999, 47.4 percent of students with disabilities spent 80 percent or more of their day in general education classrooms, compared with 25 percent of students with disabilities in 1985 (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Although the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA did not actually use the term *inclusion*, it effectively codified the principle and practice of inclusion by requiring that students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) ensure access to the general education curriculum. This landmark reauthorization broadened the concept of inclusion to include academic as well as physical and social access to general education instruction and experiences (Kluth, Villa, & Thousand, 2002).

Despite the continued evolution toward inclusive education, however, tremendous disparities exist among schools, districts, and states. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (2003) found that the percentage of

students with disabilities ages 6–21 who were taught for 80 percent or more of the school day in general education classrooms ranged from a low of 18 percent in Hawaii to a high of 82 percent in Vermont. Further, the nature of inclusion varies. In some schools, inclusion means the mere physical presence or social inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms; in other schools, it means active modification of content, instruction, and assessment practices so that students can successfully engage in core academic experiences and learning.

Why can some schools and districts implement inclusion smoothly and effectively, whereas others cannot? Three sources give guidance in pro-

#### **Connection with Best Practices**

Inclusive education is most easily introduced in school communities that have already restructured to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student populations in regular education. Initiatives and organizational best practices to accomplish this aim include transdisciplinary teaming, block scheduling, multi-age student grouping and looping, schoolwide positive behavior support and discipline approaches, detracking, and school-within-a-school family configurations of students and teachers. These initiatives facilitate the inclusion and development of students with disabilities within general education.

School leaders should clearly communicate to educators and families that

By 1999, 47.4 percent of students with disabilities spent 80 percent or more of their day in general education classrooms, compared with 25 percent of students in 1985.

viding high-quality inclusive practice. First, research findings of the past decade have documented effective inclusive schooling practices (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). Second, our own experiences as educators suggest several variables. Third, we interviewed 20 nationally recognized leaders in the field of inclusive education who, like ourselves, provide regular consultation and training throughout the United States regarding inclusive practice.

#### **A Systems Approach**

Successful promotion and implementation of inclusive education require the five following systems-level practices: connection with other organizational best practices; visionary leadership and administrative support; redefined roles and relationships among adults and students; collaboration; and additional adult support when needed.

best practices to facilitate inclusion are identical to best practices for educating all students. This message will help members of the school community understand that inclusion is not an add-on, but a natural extension of promising research-based education practices that positively affect the teaching and learning of all students.

#### **Visionary Leadership**

A national study on the implementation of IDEA's least restrictive environment requirement emphasized the importance of leadership—in both vision and practice—to the installation of inclusive education. The researchers concluded,

How leadership at each school site chose to look at LRE was critical to how, or even whether, much would be accomplished beyond the status quo. (Hasazi, Johnston, Liggett, & Schattman, 1994, p. 506)

In addition, a study of 32 inclusive school sites in five states and one Canadian province found that the degree of administrative support and vision was

the most powerful predictor of general educators' attitudes toward inclusion (Villa et al., 1996).

For inclusive education to succeed, administrators must take action to publicly articulate the new vision, build consensus for the vision, and lead all stakeholders to active involvement. Administrators can provide four types of support identified as important by front-line general and special educators: personal and emotional (for example, being willing to listen to concerns); informational (for example, providing training and technical assistance); instrumental (for example, creating time for teachers to meet); and appraisal (for example, giving constructive feedback related to implementation of new practices) (Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994).

Visionary leaders recognize that changing any organization, including a school, is a complex act. They know that organizational transformation requires ongoing attention to consensus building for the inclusive vision. It also requires skill development on the part of educators and everyone involved in the change; the provision of extra common planning time and fiscal, human, technological, and organizational resources to motivate experimentation with new practices; and the collaborative development and communication of a well-formulated plan of action for transforming the culture and practice of a school (Ambrose, 1987; Villa & Thousand, in press).

#### ***Redefined Roles***

For school personnel to meet diverse student needs, they must stop thinking and acting in isolated ways: "These are my students, and those are your students." They must relinquish traditional roles, drop distinct professional labels, and redistribute their job functions across the system. To facilitate this role redefinition, some schools have developed a single job description for all professional educators that clearly articulates as expected job functions collaboration and shared responsibility for educating all of a community's



children and youth.

To help school personnel make this shift, schools must clarify the new roles—for example, by making general education personnel aware of their legal responsibilities for meeting the needs of learners with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. In addition, schools must provide necessary training through a variety of vehicles, including inservice opportunities, coursework, co-teaching, professional support groups, and other coaching and mentoring

activities. After clarifying teachers' new responsibilities and providing training, schools should encourage staff members to reflect on how they will differentiate instruction and design accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of all students. School administrators should monitor the degree of collaboration between general and special educators. They should also include implementation of IEP-mandated activities as part of ongoing district evaluation procedures.



### **Collaboration**

Reports from school districts throughout the United States identify collaboration as a key variable in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Creating planning teams, scheduling time for teachers to work and teach together, recognizing teachers as problem solvers, conceptualizing teachers as frontline researchers, and effectively collaborating with parents are all dimensions reported as crucial to successful collaboration (National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995).

Achievement of inclusive education presumes that no one person could have all the expertise required to meet the needs of all the students in a classroom. For inclusive education to work, educators must become effective and efficient collaborative team members. They must develop skills in creativity, collaborative teaming processes, co-teaching, and interpersonal communication that will enable them to work together to craft diversified learning opportunities for learners who have a wide range of interests, learning styles, and intelligences (Thousand & Villa, 2000; Villa, 2002a; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, in preparation). In a study of more than 600 educators, collaboration emerged as the only variable that predicted positive attitudes toward inclusion among general and special educators as well as administrators (Villa et al., 1996).

### **Adult Support**

An "only as much as needed" principle dictates best practices in providing adult support to students. This approach avoids inflicting help on those who do not necessarily need or want it. Thus, when paraprofessionals are assigned to classrooms, they should be presented to students as members of a teaching team rather than as people "velcroed" to individual students.

Teaching models in which general and specialized personnel work together as a team are effective and efficient ways of arranging adult support to

meet diverse student needs (National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995; Villa, 2002b). Such models include

- *Consultation.* Support personnel provide assistance to the general educator, enabling him or her to teach all the students in the inclusive class.
- *Parallel teaching.* Support personnel—for example, a special educator, a Title I teacher, a psychologist, or a speech language therapist—and the classroom teacher rotate among

also effectively support inclusion are

- Current theories of learning (such as multiple intelligences and constructivist learning).
- Teaching practices that make subject matter more relevant and meaningful (for example, partner learning, project- and activity-based learning, and service learning).
- Authentic alternatives to paper-and-pencil assessment (such as portfolio artifact collection, role playing, and demonstrations).

**The degree of administrative support and vision was the most powerful predictor of general educators' attitudes toward inclusion.**

heterogeneous groups of students in different sections of the general education classroom.

- *Supportive teaching.* The classroom teacher takes the lead role, and support personnel rotate among the students.
- *Complementary teaching.* The support person does something to complement the instruction provided by the classroom teacher (for example, takes notes on a transparency or paraphrases the teacher's statements).
- *Coteaching.* Support personnel coteach alongside the general education teacher.

### **Promoting Inclusion in the Classroom**

Several curricular, instructional, and assessment practices benefit all the students in the classroom and help ensure successful inclusion. For instance, in a study conducted by the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (1995), the majority of the districts implementing inclusive education reported cooperative learning as the most important instructional strategy supporting inclusive education. Some other general education theories and practices that

■ A balanced approach to literacy development that combines whole-language and phonics instruction.

- Thematic/interdisciplinary curriculum approaches.
- Use of technology for communication and access to the general education curriculum.
- Differentiated instruction.

### **Responding to Diversity**

Building on the notion of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), universal design provides a contemporary approach to facilitate successful inclusion (Udvari-Solner, Villa, & Thousand, 2002).

In the traditional retrofit model, educators determine both content and instructional and assessment strategies without taking into consideration the special characteristics of the actual learners in the classroom. Then, if a mismatch exists between what students can do and what they are asked to do, educators make adjustments. In contrast, educators using the universal design framework consider the students and their various learning styles first. Then they differentiate curriculum *content, processes, and products* before delivering instruction.

For example, in a unit on the history of relations between the United States and Cuba, students might access *content* about the Cuban Missile Crisis by listening to a lecture, interviewing people who were alive at that time, conducting Internet research, reading the history text and other books written at a variety of reading levels, or viewing films or videos. The teacher can differentiate the *process* by allowing students to work independently, in pairs, or in cooperative groups. Additional processes that allow learners of differing abilities and learning styles to master standards include a combination of whole-class instruction, learning centers, reflective journal writing, technology, and field trips. Finally, students may demonstrate their learning through various *products*, including written reports, debates, role-plays, PowerPoint presentations, and songs.

Thus, students can use a variety of approaches to gain access to the curriculum, make sense of their learning, and show what they have learned. A universal design approach benefits every student, not just those identified as having disabilities.

Differentiating to enable a student with disabilities to access the general education curriculum requires creative thinking. Four options suggest varying degrees of student participation (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1998).

- First, a student can simply join in with the rest of the class.
- Second, multilevel curriculum and instruction can occur when all students involved in a lesson in the same curriculum area pursue varying levels of complexity.
- Curriculum overlapping is a third option, in which students working on the same lesson pursue objectives from different curricular areas. A student with severe disabilities, for example, could practice using a new communication device during a hands-on science lesson while others focus primarily on science objectives.
- The fourth option, and the last resort, involves arranging alternative activities when a general education activity is inappropriate. For example, a

student may need to participate in an activity within his Individualized Education Program, such as employment training in the community, that falls outside the scope of the general education curriculum.

### Bridging the Gap

Systems-level and classroom-level variables such as these facilitate the creation and maintenance of inclusive education. Systemic support, collaboration, effective classroom practices, and a universal design approach can make inclusive education work so that students with disabilities have the same access to the general education curriculum and to classmates as any other student and the same opportunity for academic, social, and emotional success.

Inclusive education is a general education initiative, not another add-on school reform unrelated to other general education initiatives. It incorporates demonstrated general education best practices, and it redefines educators' and students' roles and responsibilities as creative and collaborative partners. The strategies described here can bridge the gap between what schools are doing well and what they can do better to make inclusion part and parcel of a general education program. ■

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### STUDENT COLLABORATION QUIZ

1. How often were you expected to support the academic and social learning of other students as well as be accountable for your own learning by working in cooperative groups?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
2. Were you, as a student, given the opportunity and training to serve as an instructor for a peer?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
3. Were you, as a student, given the opportunity to receive instruction from a trained peer?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
4. Were you, as a student given the opportunity to co-teach a class with an adult?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
5. How often were you taught creative problem solving strategies and given an opportunity to employ them to solve academic or behavioral challenges?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
6. How often were you asked to evaluate your own learning?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
7. How often were you given the opportunity to assist in determining the educational outcomes for you and your classmates?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
8. How often were you given the opportunity to advocate for the educational interests of a classmate or asked to assist in determining modifications and accommodations to curriculum?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
9. How often were you involved in a discussion of the teaching act with an instructor?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
10. How often were you asked to provide your teachers with feedback as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of their instruction and classroom management?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
11. Were you, as a student, given the opportunity and training to serve as a mediator of conflict between peers?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
12. How often were you, as a student, encouraged to bring a support person to a difficult meeting to provide you with moral support?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
13. How often were you provided the opportunity to lead or facilitate meetings that were addressing your academic progress and/or future (e.g., developing personal learning plans, student-parent-teacher conferences, an IEP meeting)?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often
14. How often did you participate as an equal with teachers, administrators, and community members on school committees (e.g., curriculum committee, discipline committee, hiring committee, school board)?  
Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often

Materials from, Villa, Thousand, & Nevin (2013) *A guide to co-teaching: New lessons and strategies to facilitate student learning* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) and Thousand, Villa, & Nevin (2015) *Differentiating instruction: Planning for universal design and teaching for college and career readiness* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Are you Smarter than a Middle School Student?

<b>Facts About the Student</b> <b>Name: Shamonique</b>	<b>Facts About the Class/Lesson</b>	<b>Mismatches Between Student Facts &amp; Class/Lesson Facts</b>	<b>Brainstormed Potential Solutions to Mismatches Between Facts</b>
<p>Sense of humor</p> <p>Happy and Enthusiastic</p> <p>Gains information through conversation &amp; from visuals</p> <p>Interested in &amp; knowledgeable about music, movies, Pop culture</p> <p>Reads 100 words with sight word approach</p> <p>IEP Goals:            Make relevant comments and ask relevant questions            Require 100 additional sight words            Learn a minimum of 10 core curriculum facts per month in each academic class            Create, dictate &amp; edit a school-related story each week</p>	<p>Grade level social studies text</p> <p>Teacher is knowledgeable &amp; enthusiastic about content</p> <p>Teacher lectures &amp; students take notes</p> <p>Occasionally off topic</p> <p>Nightly homework, start in class</p> <p>Students called on randomly</p> <p>Weekly tests, frequent quizzes</p>		