

Achievement for All

Professional Development for Inclusive Education

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**“Achievement for All”
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Introduction

“Achievement for All” is a professional development program designed to promote and encourage inclusive practices in the Eastern School District. At the core of the program is the philosophy that all educators – special education and general education – need to be familiar with inclusive school practices.

Defining Inclusion

“Inclusion is an attitude and a value system that promotes the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers”(Guetzole). Inclusive schools embrace the notions that all children belong, and that all children will learn if their educational needs are met. Notably absent from this definition is any mention of children with disabilities or special education. Inclusion is not a special education issue. It is about developing supportive schools and fostering high achievement for all staff and all students.

Need to Broaden Understanding of Inclusion

While special education teachers are familiar with the concept of inclusion, many general education teachers are less familiar with it. As long as inclusion is viewed as a special education issue the goal of inclusion can not be attained. The tendency to view inclusion as a special education issue is not peculiar to us. Ilene Schwartz (University of Washington) and Charlene Green (Clark County School District in Georgia) wrote about misconceptions and misunderstandings in the United States:

Although inclusion is a common topic among special education educators and parents of children with disabilities, it is less likely to be discussed by general education teachers; likewise, many parents of children without disabilities do not even recognize the term “inclusion” as relevant to their children’s education. For inclusion to achieve its potential, discussions about inclusive school practices must take place among entire schools, districts, and communities. The planning, implementation, and evaluation of inclusive school practices must also become inclusive, involving all members of the school community (Schwartz and Green, 2001, p.3).

Goals/Objectives

The “Achievement for All” program is founded upon the principle that inclusion benefits all students, not only special education students. It supports the strategic goals of Eastern School Board, which are:

1. To challenge and develop the learning and achievement capabilities of **each** student in Eastern School District.

- To provide safe, caring learning environments in all schools in the Eastern School District.

In the brochure "Inclusive Educational Practices", The Department of Education listed academic and lifelong benefits that are best achieved in inclusive education systems. We have recast that list into a statement of objectives for the "Achievement for All" program.

- promote higher academic achievement
- increase skill acquisition and generalization
- improve results on standardized assessments
- support achievement of long-term academic goals
- nurture a sense of school belonging
- improve school retention
- improve social development and increased social interaction
- enhance physical, mental health and self-esteem
- foster greater independence
- increase opportunities and favorable socioeconomic outcomes later in life
- facilitate development of positive beliefs about disability
- support adult functioning

Correlation with District goals

Recently, the Center for Studies in Inclusive Education published an *Index for Inclusion* to help guide schools through the process of inclusive school development. The index is summarized below to show how closely the indicators relate to the goals of the Eastern School District.

Indicators of Inclusion	Goal 1	Goal 2
Creating Inclusive Cultures		
Everyone is made to feel welcome	✓	✓
Students help each other	✓	✓
Staff collaborate with each other		✓
Staff and students treat one another with respect	✓	✓
There is a partnership between staff and parents/caregivers	✓	✓
Staff and administrators work well together	✓	✓
The local community is involved in the school	✓	✓
Establishing Inclusive Values		
There are high expectations for all students	✓	✓
Staff, administrators, students and parent/caregivers share a philosophy of inclusion	✓	✓
Students are equally valued	✓	✓
Staff and students treat each other as human beings as well as occupants of a "role"	✓	✓

Indicators of Inclusion	Goal 1	Goal 2
Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school	✓	✓
The school strives to minimize discriminatory practices	✓	✓
Developing the School for All		
Staff appointments and promotions are fair	✓	✓
All new staff are helped to settle into the school	✓	✓
The school seeks to admit all students from its locality	✓	✓
The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people	✓	✓
All new students are helped to settle into the school	✓	✓
The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued	✓	✓
Organizing support for diversity		
All forms of support are coordinated	✓	✓
Staff development activities help staff respond to student diversity	✓	✓
"Special educational needs" policies are inclusion policies	✓	✓
Support for those learning English as a second language is coordinated with learning support	✓	✓
Behavior support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies	✓	✓
Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased	✓	✓
Barriers to attendance are reduced	✓	✓
Bullying is minimized	✓	✓
Orchestrating learning		
Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind	✓	✓
Lessons encourage the participation of all students	✓	✓
Lessons develop an understanding of difference	✓	✓
Students are actively involved in their own learning	✓	✓
Students learn collaboratively	✓	✓
Assessment contributes to the achievement of all students	✓	✓
Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect	✓	✓
Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership	✓	✓
Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participation of all students	✓	✓
Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students	✓	✓
Homework contributes to the learning of all	✓	✓
All students take part in activities outside the classroom	✓	✓
Mobilizing resources		
Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning	✓	✓
Staff expertise is fully utilized	✓	✓
Staff develop resources to support learning and participation	✓	✓
Community resources are known and drawn upon	✓	✓
School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion	✓	✓

Scope of the PD Program

The goal of promoting the development of inclusive education practices in all schools within the Eastern School District will be met through the following strategies:

- The utilization of "Lead Teachers" and "School Teams" to inform school communities about inclusive practices.
- In-service for "Lead Teachers" (using the "Train-the-Trainer" model in Appendix A).
- The implementation of "collegial circles" or "teacher reading groups" in select schools.
- Continued District-wide PD on inclusion.

Lead Teachers, School Teams, and Collegial Circles

The steps outlined in this program to promote inclusion are based on Margaret Wheatley's "Emergence Theory". This theory states that large scale change happens when networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what is possible. As these networks become stronger they become a "system of influence" – a powerful cultural shift that greatly influences behaviors and defines accepted practices. (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007)

Step One

The first step in creating a "system of influence" for inclusion is to ensure that a "lead teacher" exists in interested schools. It would be ideal if the lead teacher selected was a general educator since the goal of the program is to promote inclusion throughout the entire school. Selecting a specialist teacher as the lead may perpetuate the view that inclusion is a special education issue.

Step Two

The lead teacher will receive professional development in the areas of inclusion and differentiation of instruction, and will be provided with materials so that he or she can return to their school and educate the teaching staff. The knowledge staff gain through the lead teacher will result in further interest in inclusion among staff. With a general understanding of an inclusive school philosophy, the staff will be in a better position to evaluate the extent to which they and their school are following inclusive practices, and whether or not inclusion should be a part of their professional growth plan and/or school development process.

Step Three

Schools interested in further development of inclusive practices will create a school team or committee in the area, under the leadership of the “lead teacher”. The team will be representative of all stakeholders – administrators, general education teachers, and specialists.

Step Four

The inclusive education team will be responsible for running “teacher reading groups” or “collegial circles” that would promote further learning and sharing between teachers. Necessary material for the Circles will be provided to the school teams through the lead teachers. Lead teachers will have access to the Itinerant Teachers for Inclusive Education through telephone, e-mail, and board mail to receive resources, ask questions, and discuss issues arising in their schools.

Step Five

Individual educators interested in further training in inclusion will access this through the District PD calendar. A school may also request PD from the District for their staff.

Administrative and Resource Support

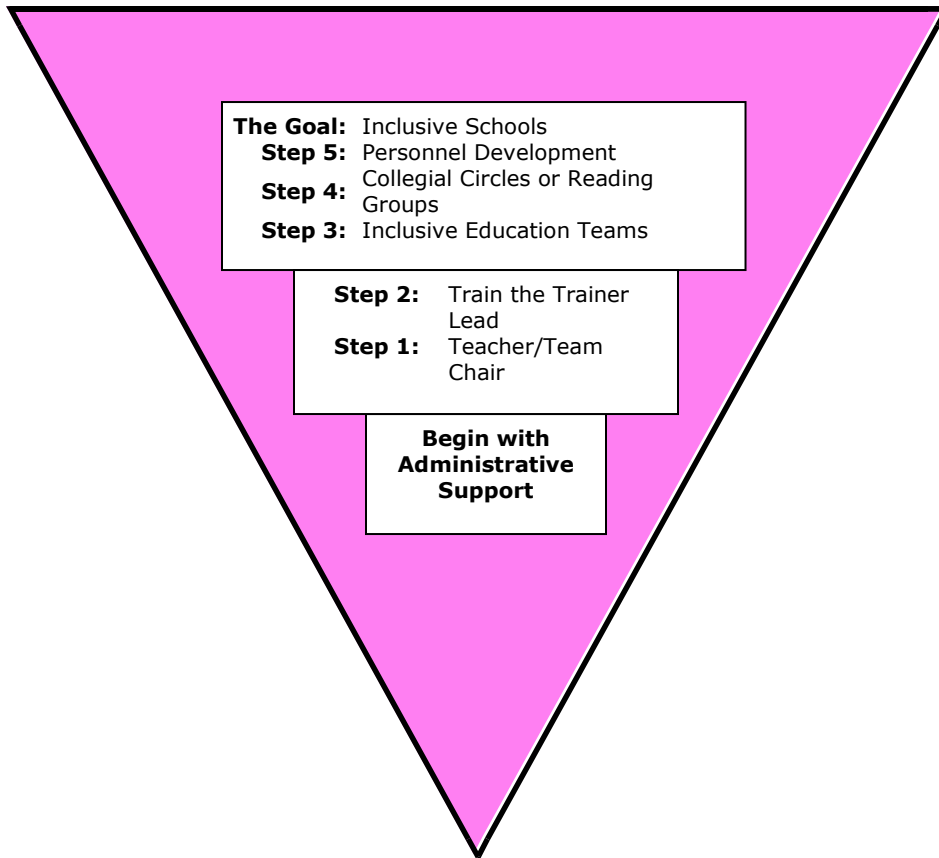
While educators are a vital part of any planning process, teachers alone will not bring about needed change. Teachers need administrative support to make long-term or systematic change. This support comes from site-level administration, the District, and the Department. (Cal STAT Leadership Sites, 2006)

Site level administration, in the initial stages of program implementation, will need to provide lead teachers with time to share the knowledge that they have gained during their PD. If schools choose to further explore inclusion, time for teacher learning and collaboration will have to be provided.

The Eastern School District will provide Professional Development to lead teachers, interested educators, and schools through the inclusive education itinerant positions. It is important that District personnel are familiar with inclusion and the services offered by the itinerant teachers. In particular, District personnel that are responsible for planning District closeouts need to be aware of the broad spectrum of topics inclusion encompasses, and how those topics relate to the goals outlined in teachers’ Professional Growth Plans, School Development Plans, and the District’s Strategic Plan.

The Department of Education will provide substitute days for lead teachers to receive training. The Department has provided 30 substitute days for this purpose. If principal’s in interested schools provide a substitute day from their bank, and the district matches this by providing a day from the inclusion “bank”, it would permit the training of 30 lead teachers this school year.

System of Influence Utilizing Lead Teachers



Implementation ⇒ Durability ⇒ Sustainability ⇒ Evaluation

Intensive support from the District and Department will be required in the first five years of program implementation to ensure that the implementation becomes durable. Once durable, administrators at school, District, and Department levels need to ensure that the practices are sustained. Individual and school evaluation will occur through both the professional growth plan and school development plan models respectively.

Appendix A

Achievement for All Train the Trainer - Inclusion Principles and Practices

Learning Goal:

The training session will provide team leaders with a quality learning experience to improve their effectiveness as facilitators of inclusive practices in today's changing schools and classrooms.

Participants (lead teachers) will attend a two-day Train the Trainer session that will provide processes and products to help facilitate "collegial circles", discussion groups, best practices and problem solving sessions with their own staff.

Train the Trainer Workshop Format

Each training session is highly interactive. Content is designed using proven methods that are effective in transferring knowledge and helping adults learn. Learning will include case studies, instruction, simulations, practice sessions, group interaction, problem analysis, exercises, self-assessment tools and role plays.

This experience is designed to build the confidence, knowledge, and skills of individuals charged with facilitating high-impact, relevant, and involved inclusive education change activities in their schools. Emphasis will be placed on the tools needed to conduct group discussion, instruction, action planning and follow up.

A Menu of Options for Trainers

Individualized goals are addressed through participant/school self-assessment and selection from a choice of training modules and materials, including power-point presentations, over-heads, activities, hand-outs and professional articles and resources.

Methods for enhancing inclusion practice effectiveness are requested specifically from **Inclusion Itinerants**, referral to curriculum specialist and/or by using adult learning methods that are embedded within materials on a selected inclusion topic. In addition, materials or modules are designed to meet a range of time frames, from a half-hour to a one-hour session or Collegial Circle that explores ***Inclusion: Principles and Practices.***

This ***Train the Trainer*** workshop will enable participants to:

- Increase knowledge, skill, and confidence in their 'Inclusion Leader' role
- Apply effective adult learning principles
- Establish and maintain a positive learning climate
- Present information and answer questions effectively
- Lead and sustain group discussions
- Implement a meaningful strategy to assess progress of established goals

Key Topics

- Uncovering and addressing inclusion issues
- Helping participants clarify and define inclusion
- Developing agendas with relevant content
- Implementing inclusion “collegial circles”: a step-by-step guide
- Connecting inclusion to school development and classroom curriculum outcomes
- Facilitating Best Practices Sessions
- Asking for Help – Teacher Collaboration
- Strategies for Success; Curriculum and Classroom Management Activities
- Making clear and concise presentations
- Delivering “Inclusion” training without anxiety
- Options for getting participants' questions answered
- Questioning strategies to lead discussions
- Balancing participation between the leader and learners
- Monitoring and debriefing learning exercises
- Facilitating respectful discussion of sensitive issues
- Using resources appropriately and flexibly for different needs and reasons
- Listening, feedback, and intervention techniques
- Structuring safe learning environments