LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Teaching learners with disabilities is not a difficult task once one makes the conceptual adjustment necessary. Also, it is not only the classroom teachers at younger and older levels who must adjust their thinking to exhibit leadership. All those who see value in moving from the special education model to the inclusive education model must re-order their thinking in keeping with contemporary thought. I speak to leaders among government, school system administrators, school administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, educational assistants, and others, psychologists and other professionals, parents, persons with disabilities, typical students, and students with disabilities. All, in different ways, serve as leaders.

Some years ago I was invited to write an article for a new Spanish journal on inclusive education. The article I wrote was *Keys to Successful Education: A Perspective from Experience in the Field.* In the article I reviewed characteristics of leadership I had seen while visiting various nations, one of which was Russia on a number of occasions. The keys I noted were:

- A Questing Attitude: Having the foresight to understand that change to inclusive education was both needed and possible.

- Leadership: Basically, this refers to having the courage to move from the past to a more socially just future in terms of education and learners with disabilities.

- Respect: Realizing that all learning is of value and not to be made second-class just because the learners have disabilities. The learning of these students is just as hard-earned and valuable to them as it is for those with the scholastic ability to master the curriculum.

When forming subcommittees, have one member of the planning team take responsibility for opening lines of communication among the various groups within the school community (e.g., parents, classroom and resource teachers, counsellors, and students). The planning team will have ongoing discussions with the school community throughout the planning process.

Inviting active, participatory partnerships in the planning process

- promotes sincere discussion and debate
- fosters commitment within the school community
- provides a more accurate representation of school community issues

Throughout the planning process, planning teams will be challenged with the task of reaching consensus both within the team and within the school community. In situations where the team cannot reach consensus, the process needs to continue to move forward while the team tries to obtain the highest possible level of agreement.

Team Considerations

Listed below are four key considerations to keep in mind regarding what may affect the team and its ability to carry out effective planning.

- **Timing:** Planning and reporting are processes, not events, and the team should approach them as processes requiring time and patience.

  At the start of each process, team-building activities help to ensure that individuals "buy-in" because they see themselves as a valued part of a team engaged in a clearly outlined process to accomplish something worthwhile.

- **Risk Taking:** The team is more effective when it is supported as it takes the risk of engaging in planning and reporting processes that will be new to some people and that may require movement out of a comfort zone. This support should be built in at the organizational level.

- **Leadership:** Strong leadership plays a critical role in the success of any organization or initiative.

  Research on school improvement has clearly revealed that having a key person in place to keep things on track and moving forward effectively is absolutely essential for the successful accomplishment of a plan.

  This key person, whether it is the principal or someone else, broadens the base of leadership so that there is shared commitment to keeping a plan or initiative going even if a key person leaves.

- **Capacity Building:** A collaborative culture helps to develop leaders who can then generate commitment to continuous school or organizational improvement.

Team Orientation

Effective team functioning requires that members understand

- the function, purpose, and priorities of the team effort
- their roles, responsibilities, and tasks as part of the team

- Achievement: Understanding that achievement is individual and to be valued at every level rather than negatively compared to the achievement of others groups.

- Learning is Learning: Capacity to learn academic facts varies, but it is to be respected whether the learning is made by students or others associated with the education system, such as educational administrators and parents.

- Collaboration: Politicians and educators can change the view that only they are responsible for contributing to learning. Parents, other school staff, politicians, typical students, and students labeled with disabilities all can make important contributions in different ways through collaboration.

- Determination: deciding in favour of social justice in education for all and creating structures to increase and realize social justice must be a quality of all contributing to positive education change for all students.

- Get Started: I quote Lao-Tzu with regard to this key. "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with one step". In other words, stop finding reasons not to do anything, follow your good intentions with action.

The qualities noted above, some which overlap, are the motors that begin movement toward inclusion. Actual movement calls for active leadership by all involved with inclusive education in different roles. This movement and what it impels are the focus of discussion here. The end result, the focus of discussion in the first of this series, is the result, the objective, the destination of our educational trip. Leadership is the agent that determines whether the trip will be successful.

Leadership toward inclusive education, as defined by the United Nations, UNESCO, and other world-level organizations is multi-level. A problem is that not

Team Formation

The formation of a planning team is a particularly successful method for initiating, implementing, monitoring, and revising plans. A team helps to identify, clarify, and balance the concerns of many people and groups. For most effective group dynamics, limit team size to eight to ten members. Some teams maintain a smaller size (five to seven members) but hold open meetings for everyone to attend. This approach helps to ensure that everyone who has an interest in participating is part of the process.

Involving key partners on the planning team, particularly people directly affected by a planned initiative, should happen immediately to give people the ownership that is critical to the sustainability and success of the plan. This success is unlikely to happen if people feel no control over the change affecting them.

Invitations to participate on a planning team may be extended to every member of the school staff and to the representatives of Advisory Councils for School Leadership or the Parent Council. These stakeholders may also be provided with opportunities to be involved in the planning process in other ways. Participants, for example, could join one of the various subcommittees that are routinely formed to assist in the planning.

Self-selection or election by a majority is preferred to an appointment by a principal. Generally, an already established working group, such as a professional development committee, is not designated as the planning team. Also avoid forming separate planning and implementation teams. Allowing individuals who are responsible for implementation to assist in planning their own activities is one of the best ways to foster accountability and commitment.

Potential Team Members

When considering the planning process, include divisional staff, teachers, counsellors, students, parents, and others who may aid the planning team, such as people from cultural associations, the business community, health agencies, and so on. Other potential members might include

- department heads/chairpersons
- school administrators
- other school staff
- parent representatives
- community members

This list is in no way exhaustive and there are likely other partners that schools could include as part of the core planning team because they fit into a unique school or system context.

Team members do not necessarily attend planning meetings. For instance, student input can be achieved through committee representation at the Senior Years, through student voice or surveys at the Middle Years, and through classroom discussions at the Early Years.

Student input may be obtained in a variety of ways, dependent upon age and stage of development.

Being as inclusive as possible is especially critical at the outset so that a variety of perspectives inform the plan and essential supporters immediately opt in because they feel part of the process.

everyone, and perhaps not most, while being well-intentioned do not always understand the differences between inclusive education and special education. In essence, the difference is that they are completely different models on how to approach education of the same group of students. Inclusion is not simply an extension of special education with its dependency on segregation for many students, with its many ways of marking out certain students as different, and with its tendency to turn responsibility over to special education teachers rather than to the regular classroom teacher supported by special education teachers and other staff. Inclusion calls for all students being together for learning. It calls for the regular classroom teacher to be in charge of all students in the classroom, though working with supportive special education teachers and other staff. The ways governments and schools set up programs for learners with disabilities send out messages regarding leadership. Some send out messages leading to the special education model, even if those involved incorrectly call it "inclusion". Increasingly, however, those related to the education system are sending out messages of leadership supportive of change. When they say "inclusion", they mean it.

The idea of multi-level leadership and messages may be confusing. This is not a simple topic we are discussing here. The following examples may provide some clarity. They are examples from my previous visits to Russia.

- My first visit was to an early childhood program situated in a medical-related facility. Among the children were a number with physical or other disabilities. The staff were enthusiastic in working with children in small groups. Occasionally one of the children with disabilities would leave the room and go to be taught early reading, or some other subject considered particularly important

Preparing to Plan

Shared roles and responsibilities are essential to effective School Plans.

"To achieve a truly inclusive school community, all stakeholders need to have a voice in planning and implementing new directions."

Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian

The preparation and implementation of effective Annual School Plans are shared responsibilities. School principals take the lead in organizing and implementing School Plans. They involve school staff, parents, and community members in an ongoing, active, collaborative process to develop the plans. Students may also be invited to participate. Principals are responsible for submitting plans to school boards for review and approval, and for ensuring that key elements of the plans are communicated to all parents and to community members. Throughout the planning process, principals maintain an open line of communication between the school and the board office and ensure that divisional and district priorities and concerns are reflected in School Plans. Principals are also responsible for submitting School Planning Reports to the Department annually. A provincial sample of Annual School Plans, upon which each School Planning Report is based, will be reviewed annually.

Principals seek representation on the planning team from the community. Advisory Councils for School Leadership, representatives from school committees, parent councils, Healthy Child initiatives, and/or Home and School Associations are excellent sources for representation. Parents and community members who do not sit on an Advisory Council for School Leadership or a parent council may direct their ideas and concerns through a council representative. Where no form of parent council exists, principals solicit involvement from the general community to assist with planning.

To prepare and implement meaningful plans, school communities require the support and commitment of school boards. Boards review and approve Annual School Plans to ensure that they can be implemented. Divisional and district staff support the planning process by helping to identify educational priorities and by leading or coordinating planning activities.

The school principal is the co-ordinator of the planning process, responsible for organizing and implementing the School Plan. Planning needs to begin early, with an eye to inviting broad participation and diverse points of view, considering issues such as team formation, orientation, mandate, and time expectations.

To aid in time management for planning, a blank monthly planner, a sample of a completed monthly planner, and a generic timeline are displayed in Appendix E.

by special education teachers, therapists or others. This happened with some frequency. At nap time most of the children lay down together in a room equipped with mats. The children with disabilities were provided with beds in a different area where medical staff gave out medicines and paid attention to other medical needs. The various provisions of service sent out messages regarding how the children with disabilities were to be treated in the early childhood setting.

- The second example, situated in a neighbourhood school in a classroom for students of approximately 8 years of age, also sent out messages. There was a young blond boy seated at the end of the second row of desks arranged in semi-circular fashion. Beside him was a woman who seemed to be his educational assistant. The teacher was teaching the whole class a lesson. She interacted with various students, including the boy who had Down Syndrome. The educational assistant worked to keep the boy aware of what the lesson was about. At lunch one of the school staff asked me if I had noticed the boy. I said, "Yes, I had noticed him." The staff member than said, "He is Boris Yeltsin's grandson."

- Example three came from the my involvement in the Civil Society meetings leading up to the St. Petersburg G 8 meetings in the Education Panel. At the end of our meetings a large group of approximately 400 from various civil society organizations. The meeting was to conclude our meetings and to offer our recommendations in a number of areas, one being Education. The Education Panel recommended, with most participants agreeing, that inclusive education become the policy of the G 8 nations. The final part of the meeting was an address by a Russian official. As part of the Education recommendations one of our group

Step 7: Drafting the Community Report

- creating a Community Report reflecting key outcomes and priorities from the School Plan that are of particular interest to parents (p. 4.6)

- including contextual information such as school mission statement, school profile (e.g., programs, demographics), school priorities and linkages to division/district priorities, parental and community involvement initiatives, summary of previous year's report (p. 4.9)

Step 8: Sharing the Draft Plan and Finalizing the Report

- checking for completeness (p. 4.12)
- editing/proofreading (using plain language) (p. 4.12)
- obtaining plan approval by school community and school board (p. 4.12)
- writing the final Community Report (p. 4.12)
- sharing the document with school staff prior to distribution of the report (p. 4.12)

asked the official if she could pin a badge advocating inclusion on him. He agreed. His willingness to be associated with inclusive education was an act of political leadership that was meaningful to all the 400 attending. The name of the official was Vladimir Putin.

I view these three examples of leadership in education of students with disabilities. Each came from a different level of responsibility. The first, the early childhood model, while referred to as inclusive education, struck me as more associated with the special education model, specifically that referred to as integration. The medical model was apparent in much of what occurred. The staff members were well-intentioned and professionally capable. However, I noted strategies common to the special education model. This seems to me to be a case of wanting to do the best, but not really understanding the implications and structure of the inclusive education approach.

The second example, situated in a neighbourhood school sent messages much more consistent with my understanding of inclusion. We visited a class of children of approximately 8 years of age. The classroom was what would be expected for a group of that age. The desks were arranged in two semi-circles. The teacher was conducting a lesson and interacting with all students to keep them aware and involved. At the right end of the second row sat a little blond boy. My observations suggested that he had the condition referred to as Down Syndrome. The teacher interacted with him as well as with other students. Seated to the left of the boy was an educational assistant who was supporting the boy as necessary. My view was that the classroom reflected

Steps in Planning and Reporting

Step 1: Preparation (Visioning and Identifying Needs)

- forming a planning team (p. 2.7)
- identifying strengths and areas for improvement, monitoring, and/or evaluation (p. 2.12)
- identifying educational priorities (including linkages to divisional and provincial priorities) (p. 2.15)
- selecting strategies to achieve priorities and outcomes (p. 2.16)

Step 2: Identifying Data Sources and Data Collection

- conducting a needs assessment (formal/informal) (p. 2.23)
- identifying data sources and indicator categories (p. 2.22)
- linking needs to available data (p. 2.24)
- selecting and/or creating measurement instruments (formal/informal) (p. 2.19)
- timetabling (creating a schedule for planning, data collection, and communication) (p. 2.21)
- collecting data (p. 2.24)

Step 3: Data Analysis and Decision Making

- identifying priorities and outcomes that emerge from data (p. 2.26)
- writing SMART outcomes based on data (p. 2.13)
- obtaining plan feedback and support (p. 2.21)

Step 4: Drafting the School Plan

- drafting a school mission statement, priorities, profile, outcomes, professional development activities, parental and community involvement initiatives, summary of the budget, detailed outcome information for previous year (p. 3.3)

Step 5: Sharing the Draft Plan and Finalizing the Plan

- checking for comprehensiveness (p. 3.5)
- editing/proofreading (using plain language) (p. 3.4)
- obtaining plan approval by school community and school board (p. 3.6)
- writing the final document (p. 3.5)

Step 6: School Planning Report

- completing the provincial template by summarizing the contents of the Annual School Plan (p. 4.3)
- linking the School Planning Report to the Student Services Report (p. 4.3)
- linking the School Planning Report to the Division Planning Report (pp. 1.5, 4.3)

inclusion. The only suggestion I would have had was that the educational assistant be seated at the end of the row to the right of the boy. As it was, she was acting as a barrier between the boy and the other students. This would be easily amended.

Example three came from a political meeting charged with discussing and recommending positive future strategies in a number of civil society areas. President Putin may not have been fully aware of the message he sent by agreeing to wear a button badge advocating inclusive education. However, a message that was clear to all was sent.

The above examples suggest that while the characteristics of inclusive education may not be fully understood at some levels, the term and the values are familiar, even at the top levels of the nation. The challenge being faced by those who wish to advance inclusion is to keep moving ahead and ensuring that a sound understanding of the characteristics of education and the roles of all involved are clear. The following are brief discussions of the roles of various groups who have the potential to be leaders in the educational reform from the special education model to the inclusive education model.

The Foundation of Movement.

For most educators inclusive education is like entering a new land. All the landmarks and structures are different. The world of inclusive education requires new understandings of the responsibilities being taken on by schools, the relationships among those involved in creating the philosophical and infrastructural changes supportive of the change desired, families who are investing their children in the change, and the students

SECTION 2: PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS ▬▬

Developing and Implementing an Annual School Plan

School Plans are developed annually by a planning team.
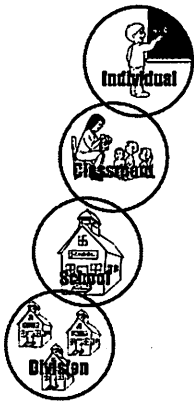
This section of the document outlines some planning concepts, primary planning issues, and guiding principles to assist school communities in initiating or enhancing their planning processes.

The information presented here reflects the essential concepts and processes identified in the planning literature. The emphasis is on long-term strategic planning with a focus on creating a clear purpose and direction for a school community. Some of the steps in the strategic planning process, such as vision building or writing a mission statement, need not take place annually. The vision and mission chosen by a school community, however, need to remain open to revision in response to a changing environment.

Annual School Plans address the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to acquire before graduation, and the strengths and needs of school communities. Plans also reflect the diversity of student supports, divisional/district priorities, and link to departmental priorities. For these reasons, reporting templates summarizing the planning processes for early childhood achievement, and division/district planning have been included in the Appendices (Appendix F, pages A19-A30). Planning for inclusive schools takes into consideration all levels of planning for all students and staff.

School Plans are developed by a planning team consisting of school, parental, and community representatives. The participation of teachers and representatives of Advisory Councils for School Leadership on the planning team is governed by legislation. The regulations for *The Education Administration Act* state: "A principal must involve teachers in any planning process that is undertaken for the school" (The Education Administration Miscellaneous Provisions Regulation, Section 31) and "An Advisory Council may participate in developing an Annual School Plan" (Advisory Councils on School Leadership Regulation, Section 32[2e]). A school can use whatever planning process complements its administrative style and organizational structure.

Over time, the planning process evolves. As planners begin to collect and analyze information gleaned from needs assessments and other available data, they begin to deepen and broaden the linkages among data, decision making, implementation, analysis, and reporting. The following eight-step chart illustrates the development of the planning and reporting process. While the steps are described sequentially, it should be noted that plans will develop at different rates within and across steps over time, and planning teams may engage in multiple steps simultaneously.

with and without disabilities who are the targets of change. All, in almost every instance, are venturing into the unknown.

Fortunately, there is a model for being in such a situation. Lev Vygotsky, the eminent Russian psychologist, and a thinker I admire, suggested that education is founded on change from the unknown to the known. One moves under the careful tutoring of teachers from the unknown and through a zone of proximal development and gradually add to their range of the known. This is a simplistic description. However, I know many of you likely are more familiar with the theoretical concept than am I.

In the case of inclusive education we all are in the realm of the unknown, university professors, government, heads of school systems, heads of individual schools, parents, teachers, students without disabilities, and students with disabilities. Inclusion is something most will have heard of, but almost all will never have experience. Their educational experiences when it comes to those with disabilities is rooted in the special education system. In many nations that means only in special schools, as the full special education model has not yet been introduces. You will know where you stand on the scale of understanding inclusive education from your own direct experience. It will be your responsibility to learn about inclusion, give it birth in schools, and develop its values for all. This process will result in new understanding of the self and one's belief system and a new understanding of others. This is the heart of the new conceptuality called for under realization of inclusive education as it applies to everyone engaged in education. Part of the challenge is the realization that moving to inclusive education is both event and process.

The event is one that all involved in education, not just education for disabilities, must experience if they wish to enter the zone of proximal development, as the concept of inclusive education is a change in which all involved in education must experience. The event requires one to accept that what they have been taught by society previously regarding disability and education is subject to change toward realization of greater social justice. This does not call for a condemnation of special education and those who have worked within it. Special education was a stage during which those with disabilities were able to enter the education system, though on its fringes. I was one of those who worked to advance special education. I was proud of my work. But time moves on and new beliefs and methodologies emerge. Part of the history of special education is that it kept trying to find ways to brings all students together in academic and social terms and to involve both specialists and regular classroom teachers in working with students with disabilities. Partial success has been achieved. Partial success has not been enough.

The necessary event I mention has two parts. One is that the individual and the system must realize and accept that the special education model has limitations that continue to separate students, that has had very modest academic success in most cases, and even more modest social success. Realization and acceptance is not sufficient however. These must be related to taking action in setting more socially just and effective structures in place, in creating an infrastructure of inclusion. All the players mentioned above have leadership roles to play in this sea change. Taking action is a process. It will take time, careful thought, and experimentation and strengthening.

Section 2:
Planning for Inclusive Schools

All of the groups mentioned earlier contribute to the careful development of inclusive education over time. All take the lead as appropriate to their place in the education system in one or more aspects of the change require. Some groups not previously seen as intrinsic players must be brought into the fold. All groups must be part of an information network based on keeping all involved and knowledgeable about what is happening.

Government

Though government officials may not be aware of all the ins and outs of the special education – inclusive education debate, it is their job to decide what legislation will guide the future. Most nations place education and disability under a Ministry of Education. Some have found logic I cannot understand in placing education and disability under other Ministries, such as health. Inclusive education means that Ministries of Education should lead in setting educational legislation for all.

The usual tactic of most Ministries with which I am familiar is to declare inclusion in regular classrooms as the first choice for all students. Then they insert a codicil in the legislation, a codicil such as "except for those students with disabilities who cannot benefit from education with their peers". To me, this approach is very difficult to understand. Segregation of student from student to strengthen learning is not a strategy in which I have confidence. Such a policy leaves the door to special education wide open and, in my experience, many school systems enter that door. It leads t continuation of the special education model often camouflaged by the term 'inclusion". Some educational jurisdictions, some school systems, and some

individual schools, however, choose to announce firm policies indicating that all students in their jurisdiction, school system, or school will attend regular classroom, except for short periods to receive needed therapy or short periods of instruction designed to reinforce ability to rejoin the full class expeditiously.

Government must take a firm leadership role if it intends to realize the benefits of inclusive education. Flexibility must be present to deal with extraordinary situations, but the home room of every student should be the same room as all the other students attend. Government must lead in setting the legislation and then making certain that the systems understand the policies involved through provision of appropriate meetings and other resources, as well as ensuring that the public is aware of the new policy.

Student Services Planning

Providing a continuum of supports and services is essential for inclusive schools.

Creating a seamless continuum of supports and services to meet the unique needs of all Manitoba students requires effective planning at all levels. Student, classroom, divisional, and provincial profiles inform the planning process for the continuum of support and services. Planning for inclusive schools requires a focus on the needs of all students, especially those with special and/or unique needs. *Supporting Inclusive Schools* is a useful resource for schools developing an effective system of support and services to meet the needs of all children.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth conducts an annual provincial sample of Annual School and Division Plans to ascertain the depth and breadth of planning across the province. The School Planning Report provides essential information related to planning processes. It does not provide the detail and context required to get a full sense of the factors affecting schools across the province.

Figure 3: Multi-Level Planning
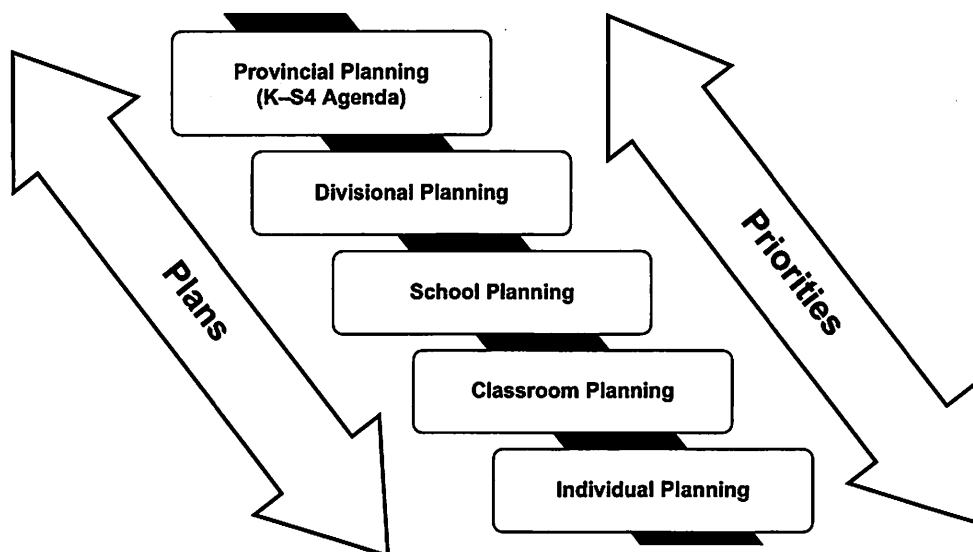
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