

Current Trends and the Essentials for Effective Special Education for Students with ID: Participation, Interaction, and Learning

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This is a “transformational era” that affects the future of Special Education

- Significant transformational changes are occurring at all three system levels:
 - macro-system (e.g., changes in global, governmental, ethical, and administrative principles, with focus on desired societal outcomes)
 - meso-system (e.g., special education as integral to the whole school, not in the margins; disability and special education organizations focusing more on the person and less on a segregated room/building: person centered planning, individualized supports, personal outcomes; and implementing streamlined organizations, performance based indicators, continuous improvement, participative leadership)
 - micro-system levels (e.g., individuals pursuing personal autonomy, well-being and life satisfaction in integrated communities)



What has changed in society?

- Ideas of consideration of each individual
- Goal of justice
- Self-advocacy
- Expectations of citizenship and equality
- Human dignity
- Human rights
- Health care
- Education and teaching people
- Neuroscience
- The nature and availability of services and supports for people with disabilities and their families
- A vision of a full community life
- Wide availability of technology and support resources



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- An example of these changes...



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“A
swiveling
proxy that
will even
wear a
tutu”

VGo robot enables girl with cardio-pulmonary disease and susceptibility to infections, to attend school with her friends through live video and audio, controlling movement with her home computer mouse.

Source: Brown, R.
The NYT 6/7/13 p.
A-10



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Predictions on the future of Special Education in five areas

1. What will be the future goals of Special Education?
2. Who will be the future target students?
3. What new practices will be implemented?
4. Who will be the key partners?
5. How will Special Education teachers be prepared?



1. What will be the future goals of Special Education?

- Participation for success
 - Post-secondary education
 - Improved employment opportunities
- Participation for life satisfaction
 - Preparation for adult roles and responsibilities, e.g., citizen roles, friendships, intimate relationships, sexuality education, parenting, etc.
 - Preparation for community living
- Participation for human rights
 - Human rights and personal autonomy
 - Legal recognition of rights



2. Who will be the future target students?

- Increasingly younger student eligibility
 - Preschool and infant programs
 - Focus on prevention and/or limiting future disability
 - Creating healthier communities
- Expanding older student supports into post-secondary school
 - Assure access to the educational and friendship experiences of post-secondary
 - Assure employability and responsible citizenship
- Increasingly more students with intense support needs, e.g., increasing Autism Spectrum Disorders, and fewer students identified with milder Learning Disabilities



3. What new practices will be implemented in the future?

- No students will be excluded (“zero reject”)
- Special education will be increasingly recognized as specialized *instruction with supports and accommodations*, **not** a “spcd place”/ “spcd room”/ “spcd school”
- Increased inclusion and integration
- Decreased segregation and isolation
- Increased focus on rigorous academic skills, not only “pre” skills. Demands in literacy, math, science, and social studies
- Increased use of data-based teaching strategies, within the context of excellent whole-school environments
- Increased use of new models of special education-general education collaboration such as co-teaching
- Increased research where the individuals with disabilities are research **partners** – in identifying questions, developing studies, applying results, disseminating new knowledge



4. Who will be the key partners?

- Families: Increased parent and family involvement in decisions
- Student with disability: Increased student involvement in decisions
- School leaders such as principals
- Community: Whole school and community engagement and responsibility for success of all students
- Society: Recognition of the critical role of education in community health, economic growth, and stable societies



5. How will Special Education teachers be prepared?

- **Special Education teachers will demonstrate increased specialized skills and precision in:**
 - Teaching academic skills
 - Applied behavior analysis
 - Positive school-wide supports
 - Expertise in evaluations and assessment
 - Expertise in teaching communication
 - Collaboration and co-teaching
 - Leadership skills and preparation for changed schools
- **All teachers share responsibility for all children**
- **Increased demand for cross-training, collaboration, and coordination with non-special-education teachers and professionals**
 - Special education teachers and general education teachers
 - Special education teachers and bilingual teachers
 - Special education teachers and content experts
 - Special education teachers and school principals



Reflections on the future of Special Education

What kind of society do we want? And therefore what kind of schools do we want?

Are all citizens and families valued equally by their schools and society?

Are the school and society fair for all people, with and without disabilities?

How can we prepare students with disabilities for the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and joys of adulthood? How can we support them to create for themselves a personally satisfying and contributing life?

How should teacher preparation change to meet these expectations?

How should the structure of schools and communities change to meet these goals?



Together, special educators can make this vision a reality for all

“Education

- 1. Recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, including an inclusive education system and life long learning directed to:
 - a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
 - b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
 - c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.”

(U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24, 2006.)
(Colombia signed in 2007, and ratified in 2011)



**“All human beings are born free
and equal in dignity and rights”**

United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 1 (1948)



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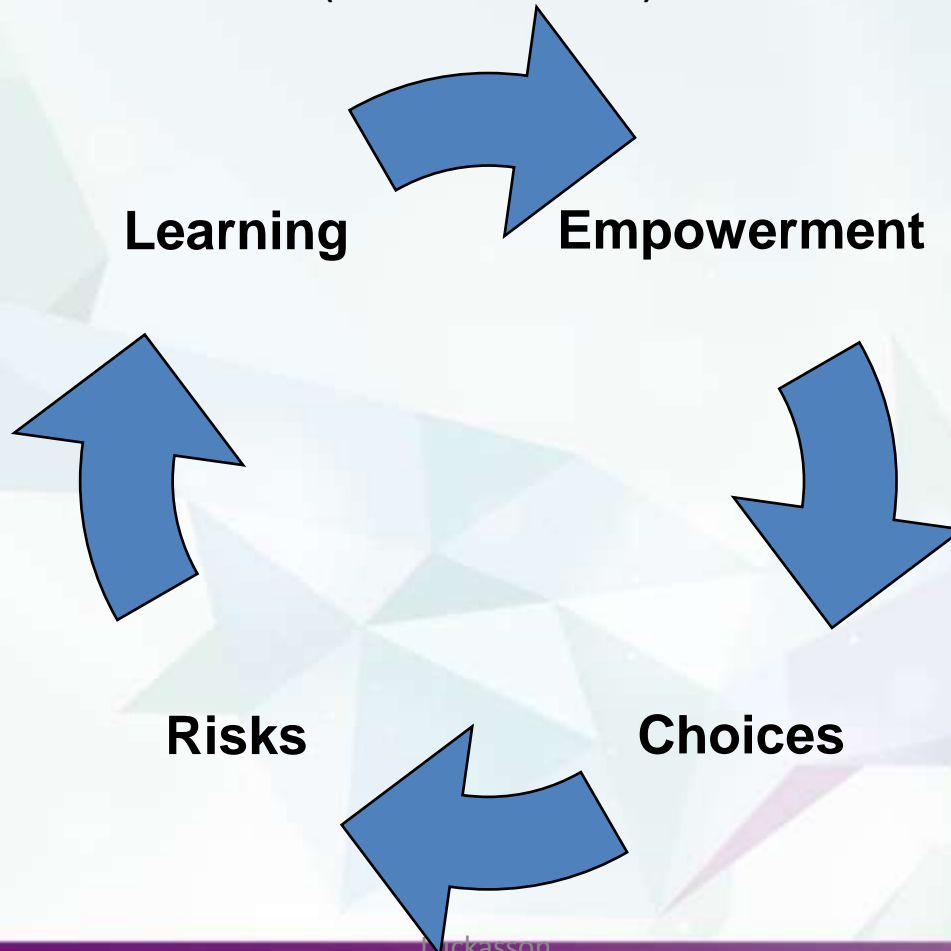
**“Everyone has the right to
education.”**



United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 26 (1948)

Cycle of education and human rights

(Luckasson 2006)



What do we need NOW to accomplish these goals for enhanced learning of students with disabilities?

1. Expert teachers
2. Effective school leadership
3. A context that values and supports the learning of children with disabilities



We know that...

- Teacher expertise (knowledge, experience, education) has a more powerful effect on student learning than student socioeconomics or class size (Darling-Hammond, 2000) especially for struggling learners



Expert Teachers

- Three core concepts identify expert teachers of students with disabilities:
 - Teaching identity, confidence, presence, continuing learning about teaching & principles
 - Purposeful and systematic instruction, clear meaningful goals,
 - Focus on the individual student, developing a relationship and rapport, caring and advocating for student's future place in the community and society

Ruppar, A., Roberts, C., & Olson, A.J. (2015). Faculty perceptions of expertise among teachers of students with severe disabilities. *Teacher Education & Special Education, 38*(3), 240-253.



What do expert special education teachers do?

- Use evidence-based teaching practices
- Exercise excellent problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Exhibit professionalism
- Measure outcomes of students
- Measure teacher actions
- Collaborate with other teachers and school workers
- Collaborate and communicate with families



What do successful school leaders do?

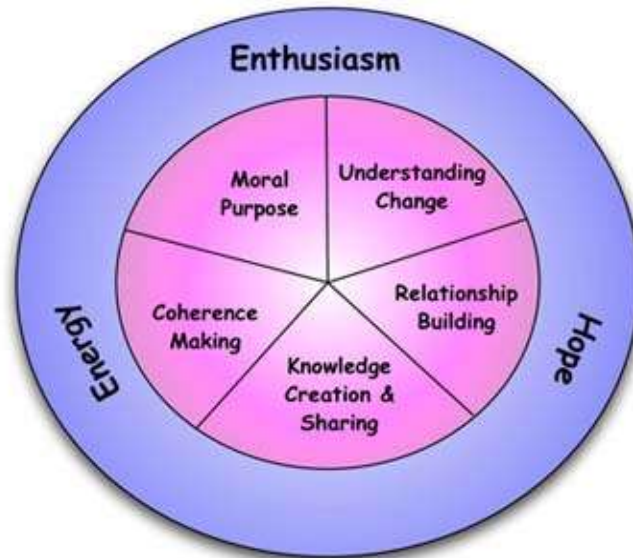
- Leadership in the school is critical and successful leaders exhibit:
 - Moral purpose
 - Understanding change
 - Relationship building
 - Knowledge creation and sharing
 - Coherence making

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



Michael Fullan: A Framework for Leadership

Leaders



Members



Results



Context

- Context is a concept that integrates the totality of circumstances that comprise the milieu of human life and human functioning. Context can be viewed as an independent and intervening variable. As an independent variable, context includes personal and environmental characteristics that are not usually manipulated such as age, language, culture and ethnicity, gender and family. As an intervening variable, context includes organizations, systems, and societal policies and practices that can be manipulated to enhance functioning. As an integrative concept, context provides a framework for (1) describing and analyzing aspects of human functioning such as personal and environmental factors, supports planning, and policy development; and (2) delineating the factors that affect, both positively and negatively, human functioning.

Shogren, K., Luckasson, R., & Schalock, R. (2014). The definition of context and its application in the field of intellectual disability. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 11(2), 109-116.



Desired context for students in schools

- The student and family:
 - Are valued members of all communities including the school community
 - Participate in all functions and areas of the school
 - Are recognized as an active voice for student's education and future
 - Student is recognized as a learner and contributor to the school
 - Are provided the supports for learning and participating



Conclusion

- Genuine participation, interaction and learning for all students with disabilities, including those with the most intense needs for supports, requires our very best efforts to recruit and retain expert teachers and effective leaders, and create a context in which every child and family is a valued member of the whole community, including their neighborhood school.



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Thank you

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