

Inclusion Means Everyone: Students, Staff, Parents, Community

CARS Plus Sacramento February 24, 2017

Dr. Tom Green

Dr. Tom Green is the Head Instructor for the Principal Leadership Institute at UC Berkeley. He worked for 45 years in public school districts as a para educator, Resource Specialist, general education teacher, union president, school board trustee, site principal, and central office director for all educational services, including special education, categorical programs, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. He retired from the Alum Rock School District as Chief School Transformation Officer.

Summary:

Public educators in the 21st Century have a legal, professional, social, and moral responsibility to support all students to maximize their potential and, to the fullest extent possible, meet or exceed grade level standards and graduate from high school with the ability to choose their next work or learning opportunity. Special educators play a critical role in fulfilling this responsibility. By definition special educators are responsible for providing advocacy, support, and effective, specialized instruction to ensure that the students least likely to succeed do so.

Special educators cannot successfully carry out this role in isolation. Success requires including everyone involved in that at risk student's life- all school staff, the family and community, and the student- in that work. Inclusion requires collaboration among all members of the educational community.

And yet, special education programs are historically isolated and do not collaborate in meaningful ways with the greater educational community- other special education programs, the students and staff in general education programs, parents, neighborhood, district, county office, external support providers. Special education programs historically maintain separate bureaucracies, separate facilities, separate professional development, separate accountability processes, separate everything. To some degree this is due to the way special education programs were created, as categorical programs with a huge body of programmatic and legal decisions focusing on the development, implementation, and accountability of special education as a separate program. We, however, play a significant role in this isolation as well. Our well-intentioned focus on ensuring that our special education-identified students receive the services to which they are entitled creates a tunnel-vision focus that isolates us from the greater educational community. And the greater community's lack of knowledge regarding specialized instructional strategies and differentiation allows it to assign students to special education programs and forget about them.

It is true that, conceptually and legally, general education has a responsibility to collaborate with special education and ensure that all students succeed. However, typically general education staff does not have the training or expertise to do so. And, special education has the specific, priority, legally articulated responsibility for doing so.

How, then, can we change this dynamic? This workshop will provide a structured discussion to support reflection and analysis of current practice, and identify strategies to reach out, build connections, and strengthen collaborative practice that can facilitate greater inclusion of special education students, accelerate their progress towards meeting or exceeding standards, and building a more collaborative community of practice and support.

Inclusion- Core Issues

We will spend our three hours together discussing these core issues in successful inclusion:

- Advocacy, agent of change
- Relationships
- Trust, respect, common interest
- Clearly stated goal that all children will maximize their potential, 95+% meet or exceed grade level
- Working across programs- gen ed/sped/content areas/support services/social & emotional/extended day/family
- Sped and gen ed credentials
- Collaborative practice
- Curriculum materials
- Instructional Practices
- Scheduling
 - Master schedule
- Gen Ed classroom
- Rtl/MTSS
- Support services include health care, nutrition, counseling
- Support services include sped and gen ed: remedial reading and math (gen ed or sped), speech & language, OT, PT, APE
- Planning/monitoring/adjusting
- IEP Mtgs/Agendas
- Training
- Parents/families
- Community
- Effective specialized instruction and support services- achievement should be accelerated