










# Picture Inclusion!

Snapshots of  
Successful Diverse  
Classrooms



Whitney H. Rapp  
Katrina L. Arndt  
Susan M. Hildenbrand



FOR MORE, go to <http://bit.ly/rapp-picture-inclusion>

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by

**Whitney H. Rapp, Ph.D.**

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by Whitney H. Rapp, Ph.D., Katrina L. Arndt, Ph.D., & Susan M. Hildenbrand, Ed.D.

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## Introduction

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This book is intended as a resource for teachers and schools determined to include all students, regardless of diverse need, in lessons based on general education curriculum. Our purpose is to demonstrate how lessons in any content or special area can be planned so that all students' individual needs are met, directly or indirectly.

More teachers are being prepared as inclusive educators through inclusive education or dual certification programs. Academic and social benefits of inclusive educational settings have been demonstrated for all students (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012; Helmstetter, Curry, Brennan, & Sampson-Saul, 1998; Hunt & Farron-Davis, 1992; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, & Goetz, 1994; McDonnell, Thorson, & McQuivey, 2000; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006; Waldron, Cole, & Majd, 2001).

There is no doubt that all teachers must be prepared to teach diverse learners in a variety of settings. It is important to ground all educators in the theory of inclusive practice and provide them with specific practices to enact that theory in real-life classrooms.

There are texts on the market that address the need for theory to practice. There are texts that offer general ideas for differentiation and UDL, that offer specific strategies but are disability specific or categorical in nature, or that offer specific noncategorical strategies by content area but do not include lesson plan formats or structures. There are texts that offer specific lesson plan structures or formats but focus only on including one or two students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The purpose of this book is to pull all of this together. All teachers face classes with very diverse needs. Yes, they may have one or two students with significant cognitive disabilities, but they will almost certainly also have students with individualized education programs (IEPs) for other needs, students with 504 plans, students with diverse cultural and linguistic needs, and students who have experienced stressors and trauma. Teachers need theory-to-practice strategies and lesson plan examples that show how lessons can be planned to include all of these students while maintaining high expectations, building community, managing the classroom, and meeting standards and IEP/504 goals.

This text focuses on grades K–5 and all academic content and special areas (English language arts [ELA], math, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and technology). This introductory section summarizes each chapter in the book, explains the reasons we chose various learning standards on which to focus, and provides an overview of alternate assessment for students with complex learning needs and our perspective on the topic.

### HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Chapter 1 consists of two parts—theoretical foundations and practical applications of inclusive education. Foundational theories include the models of disability, least dangerous assumption (Jorgensen, 2005) and presumed competence, and full citizenship in the classroom (Kliewer, 1998). Practical applications include differentiation, universal design for learning (UDL), multi-tiered systems of support, response to intervention (RTI), embedded instruction, clustering, and addressing the whole child.

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Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are the grade-level chapters. They present three classrooms, Grades 1, 3, and 5, respectively. Each classroom includes 20 students with a substantial range of diverse cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, physical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics and learning needs. Each chapter includes 20 individual “snapshot” student profiles, supplemented with IEPs and Section 504 plans for 3–5 students; a weekly chart of services provided by related services professionals; and 8 detailed lesson plans. The student snapshots provide a summary of all essential information the teacher needs to know in order to meet each student’s unique needs:

- Name, age, grade, disability classification if applicable, and family information
- Interests, strengths, and needs
- Ways to support engagement, input, and output in the classroom
- Professionals who work to support the student
- Learning goals
- Inclusive practices that facilitate mastery of these goals

We have also built flexible instructional time (FIT) into the day. Every student takes part in FIT at the same time, but they are engaged in different activities depending on their individual needs. Some services, based on best practice in the field, need to occur through one-to-one interaction or in small groups outside of the classroom. For example, best practice in English as a new language (ENL) instruction indicates focused, small-group instruction for entering ENL students (New York State Education Department, 2014). To align with these research-based practices while maintaining the integrity of a fully inclusive learning environment, these pull-out lessons occur during FIT, so no one misses new content instruction or social opportunities that are happening in the general education environment without them. FIT supports include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language therapy, ENL instruction, math or reading support, acceleration instruction, counseling, and psychological support. This is an excellent time to provide Tier 2 RTI supports to students who need them. Students who do not need any of these supports regularly can use FIT to review work with the classroom teacher, make up missed work, go to support instruction in any area, or take part in yoga or mindfulness exercises in the sensory room. FIT is intended to support every student in what they need most at a given time.

Students who are classified with disabilities or conditions that affect their daily functioning are afforded IEPs or 504 plans that detail their educational goals, supports, and services. Our belief is that having goals, supports, and services specifically outlined is an effective practice for all students. All students in the classroom are better supported when attention is paid to the goals and needs of all students and inclusive practices are outlined for each one. Each inclusive practice implemented supports multiple students in the classroom—if not all of them—directly or indirectly via ripple effect. For example, providing a variety of pencil grips may be an important support for a student who has dysgraphia, but this support also helps many typically developing elementary students manage writing tasks without becoming fatigued.

The weekly chart of services provided by related services professionals for each grade level shows how multiple professionals need to work together in the context of the general education classroom to meet all needs. The shaded sections of the charts indicate times when related services professionals co-teach in the classroom to provide direct services to students as well as times when they consult with the classroom teacher to provide indirect services.

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The eight lesson plans in each chapter are written for ELA, math, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and technology. Each plan is based on understanding by design (UBD) lesson planning—first, identifying the standard or goal being taught; second, identifying the performance tasks needed to assess mastery toward the goals; and third, designing the lesson activities. Each of these lesson plan sections includes a list of inclusive practices to use during that part of the lesson to support all students.

The inclusive practices that appear in the student snapshots and lessons address a dozen different areas of support, with the specific area indicated by the abbreviation at the beginning of the practice. For example, two frequently used practices are as follows:

1. CR1. Provide culturally responsive curricular materials, materials that reflect student interests, and resources other than textbooks.
2. SR4. Ensure that all students are familiar with regulation scales, and many have them at their desks for self-checks. Some are for voice volume and emotional escalation; some for effective use of work time; and some for interest or independence level for an activity.

In these examples, CR stands for “cultural responsiveness;” SR stands for “self-regulation.” A key to these supports is provided with Chapters 2–4, along with a classroom map showing how to design the physical space to support all students’ needs.

Chapter 5 follows the grade-level chapters and reviews theoretical foundations represented in the book, directs the reader toward future practical application, and raises questions for future exploration. The two Appendices are the Inclusive Practices Bank (Appendix A) and the Resources for Inclusion list (Appendix B). The Inclusive Practices Bank provides all the inclusive practices listed on student snapshots and applied in lesson plans, along with others that may be helpful for future planning. The intent is that this is just a starting point for the teacher to develop an even more comprehensive bank of practices that emerge as a result of supporting many individual students in many lessons, often across the grade levels. The Resources for Inclusion list contains readings, web sites, product suppliers, blogs, and centers that are available to teachers who are determined to include all students, regardless of diverse needs, in lessons based on general education curriculum.

## LEARNING STANDARDS

If we had not known it already from our experience teaching, our work on this book made clear to us that the only thing all states have in common regarding learning standards is that they all subscribe to a set of standards. Beyond that, they are widely different. Many use the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA and math, but not all. Some use the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), but not all. Some use the National Education of the Arts standards, but not all. Some use the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) standards, but—you guessed it—not all. We use different standards for different lessons and content areas in an effort to create a resource that is relevant to all teachers, regardless of state standards. We accomplish two things by doing this. First, we can connect to as many different areas of the country as possible without having to include 50 sets of lesson plans. Second, we can show that a lesson can be planned in any content area that supports every student toward a goal, regardless of the standard or goal being taught.

Table I.1 shows the body of standards used for each lesson. The most widely used standards are used more often.

**Table I.1.** Content standards used for each lesson in Grades 1, 3, and 5

Content area	First grade	Third grade	Fifth grade
English language arts (ELA)	Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS)—Print Concepts, Writing	NGLS—Reading Informational Text and Reading Literary Text; lesson also addresses a related Common Core ELA standard for Reading Informational Text	NGLS—Literary and Informational Text
Math	Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—Measurement and Data	CCSS—Operations and Algebraic Thinking	CCSS—Geometry
Science	Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)—From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes	NGSS—Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions	NGSS—Matter and Its Interactions
Social studies	Ohio State Social Studies Standards Strand: History Theme: Families Now and Long Ago, Near and Far Topic: Heritage	Ohio State Social Studies Standards Strand: Economics Theme: Communities: Past and Present, Near and Far Topic: Scarcity	Ohio State Social Studies Standards Strand: Government Theme: Regions and People of the Western Hemisphere Topic: Roles and Systems of Government
Art	National Core Art Standards for Visual Arts (NCAS-VA)—Creating	New York State Learning Standards for the Arts: Visual Arts Standards	NCAS-VA—Creating
Music	National Association for Music Education (NAFME)—General Music: Creating	NAFME—General Music: Creating	NAFME—General Music: Creating
Physical education	Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE)—Motor skills and movement patterns	SHAPE—Health-enhancing physical fitness	SHAPE—Value of physical activity
Technology	International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)—Innovative Designer	ISTE—Knowledge Constructor	ISTE—Innovative Designer

## ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

This section defines *alternate assessment* and discusses three types before presenting our perspective on the use of alternate assessment.

### What Is Alternate Assessment?

Alternate assessments are used in place of state standardized assessments to evaluate the performance of students who are unable to participate in the state assessments, even with accommodations in place. Alternate assessments provide students with significant intellectual disabilities and students who need alternate ways to gain access to assessments inclusion in the educational accountability system (National Center on Educational Outcomes [NCEO], 2017). By including students in the accountability system, we can see how a school, district, or state is doing in terms of overall student progress. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA) of 1997 (PL 105-17) first mandated that states report how students with disabilities will participate in general education curriculum and how their progress will be measured (Kleinert & Kearns, 2001). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446) contains new language about individual appropriate accommodations on state and district testing and new requirements for alternate assessments. The child’s IEP must include a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic

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achievement and functional performance of the child on state and districtwide assessments. If the student takes an alternate assessment on a particular state or districtwide assessment, then an explanation must be provided as to why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment and how the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child (Section 614 [d][1][A][VI]).

Three types of alternate assessments have been in place: 1) alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards, 2) alternate assessment based on grade-level standards, and 3) alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards.

**Alternate Assessments Based on Alternate Achievement Standards** These assessments are based on grade-level content but are reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities. There is a difference in what the student must know and do in order to be considered proficient in the content assessed, but the students are learning academic content that is clearly linked to the same grade-level content as their peers (NCEO, 2016a). Done right, these alternate assessments and alternate achievement standards still address the essential academic core of the content standards. Although more than 1% of a district's student population might take this type of alternate assessment, a cap of 1% has been placed on the use of the scores in accountability to avoid placing an inappropriate proportion of students in a lower achievement bracket. This essentially means only students with the most significant disabilities should be assessed on alternate achievement standards.

**Alternate Assessments Based on Grade-Level Achievement Standards** These assessments are based on grade-level content and are not reduced in depth, breadth, or complexity. There is no difference in what the students must know to be considered proficient in the content assessed, but they are unable to gain access to or perform on the grade-level assessment the way it is, even with accommodations. So, the students are provided a different format or context for the assessment.

**Alternate Assessments Based on Modified Achievement Standards** In the past, some states have created assessments based on modified academic achievement standards. These are for students who received instruction on grade-level content but were unlikely to achieve proficiency, so the achievement standards are modified, essentially lowering the bar rather than addressing the essential academic core of the content standards. This type of alternate assessment has been phased out by most states (NCEO, 2016c).

Different states have approached alternate assessment in different ways. Every state has determined alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. The best way to stay up to date on each state's policies, procedures, and reporting is to visit the Department of Education web site for the particular state.

## Perspectives on Alternate Assessment/Alternate Standards

Some educators feel that alternate assessment based on alternate standards lowers standards or expectations. We feel that while this can be the case, this is not necessarily always the case. There is language in the literature surrounding alternate assessment with which we agree.

Jorgensen, McSheehan, Schuh, and Sonnenmeier (2012) identified four indicators of effective ongoing assessment and evaluation of learning for students with disabilities:

1. Documentation of students' academic learning represents the full depth, breadth, and complexity of state-adopted general education academic standards.
2. Assessment reports reflect students' abilities and needs rather than deficits.

3. If students have difficulty communicating, then assessment tools and strategies are chosen accordingly and assessment results are qualified accordingly.
4. Teachers and related services providers use ongoing dynamic assessments, and findings from discrete, one-time assessment tools are used with caution.

In a statement supporting alternate assessment, TASH (2014) mentioned the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002 (PL) mandating that schools be accountable for the progress of all students, including those from subgroups vulnerable to poor educational outcomes, through standardized assessments and alternate assessments. The importance of providing an alternate assessment for students with cognitive disabilities is that they are provided with a way to gain access to an assessment that accurately indicates their performance levels. Once their performance levels are revealed, that data can be used as part of a system to improve instruction to improve the performance of all students. TASH noted that “while teaching and assessing students with significant cognitive disabilities may be challenging, these students have repeatedly demonstrated they can and do learn academic content when they are provided effective instruction and meaningful, individualized support” (2014, p. 1).

Kleinert and Kearns (2001) identified principles of alternate assessments. They must be integrally tied to effective instruction, be based on authentic instruction of real-life skills, allow the student to apply knowledge and skills, not be a single snapshot of performance, reflect performance from optimal student supports, be integrally tied to individualized curricular focus and general education curriculum, be developed to reflect knowledge and skills needed in meaningful contexts with rich social opportunities, and improve instruction and results for students who take them.

Assessments and end goals should be a match for individual students and their own challenge levels, allowing them to experience academic content in a general education context in their zone of proximal development. Opposing alternate standards for students with complex learning needs because you feel that these standards lower or water down expectations runs the risk of an all or nothing mentality and practice in which students must master the same standards and performance tasks across the board, without differentiation. If you set up an all or nothing situation, then we believe it will end up being nothing, which runs the risk of leaving students with disabilities out (If you cannot do 100%, then you get 0%, because there is no alternative). We are concerned that opposing alternate assessment standards for a small subset of students with disabilities is a setup for excluding those children with disabilities because they are not able to meet grade-level standards. If no alternate standards are in place for these students, then some people may conclude that they do not need access to general education because they are not expected to meet standards.

Although we applaud and strive for high expectations for all students, we do not agree with doing the exact same thing for all students. Better alternate assessment than failure to meet all standards. We do not believe that alternate is lower. We believe alternate is differentiation, scaffolding, and support in the zone of proximal development. Providing alternate (differentiated) standards and performance tasks provides students with access, experience, engagement, and meaningful interaction with all general education curriculum in an inclusive setting. Providing alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards presumes competence of content for all students, although some may have different productivity. Alternate assessment does not equal lower or lesser standards. Alternate assessment equals alternate standards that are still high-quality, albeit differentiated, standards! Alternate assessment is a meaningful way to assess whether students have grasped the big idea of the standard.

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Think about what the standards should reflect. Rather than expecting all students to “compare the early civilizations of the Indus River Valley and the Huang-He of China,” we should be asking all students, “How does where you live affect how you live?” All students can walk away with the same big idea, the essential understanding, even though the assessment product or process looks different. A student with a cognitive disability may not independently read articles or write essays about early civilizations, but he or she can listen to stories and talk about people. He or she can understand that where you live affects how you live. Including students with complex learning needs helps the teacher identify the key understandings *all* students should have. Teaching all students makes teachers teach better.

A note about this book: It began in a meeting one of the authors attended in support of a student with significant executive functioning needs. The parents, school administrators, and teachers present were brainstorming ways to support the student who was finding it difficult to manage the many layers of homework due each day as well as the many materials required for each class. One of the attendees suggested the student be excused from some of the work to lessen the load. The response by the parents was a resounding, “No! Don’t dumb it down.” The student was entirely capable of the work and the workload. This particular situation did not require less work or excusal from responsibilities. This particular situation required supports such as an extra set of materials at home and in each classroom, a customized planner, materials posted online so they could be retrieved if lost, and concept maps of the steps and parts of each assignment, proportionate in size to the amount of work required for each part.

Individual students need different interventions that support them in doing their best work to the highest expectations possible. That means do not leave them out. Do not give them something else entirely. Do not keep them from the general education curriculum because they cannot demonstrate mastery in the same way as others. Do not make them take too big a step. Do not make them take too small a step at a time.

Do scaffold. Do instruct in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Do design to individual needs. Do provide multitiered instruction in meaningful contexts with diverse peers. This book shows how that can be done in even the most diverse classrooms.



# Inclusion

## From Theory to Practice

This chapter introduces ideas and theories that are the foundation for this book. We have found that although many teachers support our ideas about inclusion, they do not always have a clear idea of what those ideas look like in practice. This book is designed to explain how to enact inclusive practices for all students, supporting students with and without individualized education programs (IEPs) or 504 plans or English as a new language (ENL) learners, in the same classroom. You may be thinking, “That’s nice, but that’s pie-in-the-sky dreaming, and it’s not possible.”

We think our ideas are more than pie in the sky. We think inclusion is possible for all students, regardless of the range in diversity in the classroom. We also believe all students can meet high academic standards through the praxis of inclusive teaching, the unity between the theory and practice of inclusive teaching. This means the practice—what teachers say and do in the classroom and how they plan, instruct, assess, and structure their classrooms—is grounded on research-based education theories of inclusive teaching, as well as what they believe about inclusion. This practice continually evolves through critical reflections on their experiences in a diverse classroom. Teachers will continue to learn and develop as they get to know individual students and research what is needed to support their learning and development.

If informed practice, critical reflection on experiences, and an unwavering belief in the ability of all students to learn together without “dumbing down” the content are present, then inclusive teaching is possible so that all students can meet high standards, regardless of the range of diversity.

In this book, we discuss theoretical foundations, the impact of each foundation on successful inclusion in diverse classrooms, and how these translate into specific practices for supporting all students, even in vastly diverse classroom settings, without dumbing down the curriculum. Inclusion is sometimes code for segregation—when “inclusion classroom” is used to describe one class in a grade level, what does that mean about the other classes in that grade level? Do they not include students with disability labels? Are those rooms actually segregated? That is not what inclusion means to us.

In this chapter, we address the misconception that we hear people (e.g., educators, teacher education students, families, opponents to inclusion) voice on occasion: “[12:1:1] classes are necessary because some students need them. Some students are more successful in [12:1:1] classes.” Different people might substitute various other conditions for the ones noted in the brackets. It is important to analyze what is working in the special class that seems successful—smaller class size, fewer transitions during the day, highly/specially trained professionals, presence of paraprofessional(s), and family collaboration. Let’s examine each of these classroom conditions.

*Smaller class sizes.* Class sizes for segregated special education classes are often smaller because only students with IEPs are in them, which is problematic on many levels.



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Students with disabilities who do not have regular contact with typically developing peers lack access to peer models of typical speech and social interaction or a group of peers with whom to engage. Consider the case of a young girl with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The child was placed in a segregated classroom with peers who also had intellectual disabilities and ASD, and the result was a classroom of six children, none of whom used speech. At first glance, the small class—only six students with a teacher and two teaching assistants—seemed responsive to her needs. But the classroom provided no typically developing peers to model typical speech and social interactions. Students' access to academics was limited, and the room was loud and chaotic. Several students used challenging behavior (a teacher code phrase that can include tantrums) to communicate, and the result for all children was an environment that felt like the farthest thing from a learning environment. Having access to general education would have served all the children much better, and the special education classroom could have been used as a safe space to relax, regroup, and be calm. In that scenario, after using a quiet space to regroup, students return to the general education classroom—where routines, academic curricula, and social interactions continue.

*Fewer transitions.* Fewer transitions during the day can support learning. Students in elementary school typically make transitions from the classroom to specials, such as art, physical education, and music, and to lunch and recess. Those transitions can be reduced or adapted by allowing a student to make a transition before or after the rest of the class, travel with an adult or peer buddy, or eliminate one or more transitions and allow the student to remain in the general education setting with appropriate supervision and tasks that mirror what the rest of the class is doing. The number of transitions is typically very high for high school students (and some middle school students)—transitions between multiple classes, sometimes as many as nine in a day, plus a lunch period and perhaps a home base or homeroom. Add in the stress of physically traveling throughout a high school complex, and some students are not able to make a transition as often as most. Some high schools use a schedule of four periods a day on alternating day cycles, which reduces the number of transitions, but it can be confusing. Checking in every morning with the same teacher—often a special education teacher in a resource or support setting—can help some students. It can also help to include one or even two classes that provide instruction in a content area (coordinated with the content area teacher), provide instruction in study skills or test-taking skills, or provide time to take a test with extended time or work on homework with support.

*Highly/specially trained professionals.* Highly trained professionals do not need to be kept in separate classrooms; special education teachers can do a great deal in the general education setting. In fact, we believe that special education teachers are best utilized in settings with children with and without disabilities; supporting all students is best done in a classroom that includes all students. The result can be powerful for the classroom when a special education teacher is available to a general education teacher or co-teaches with a general education teacher. This is a shift in thinking about how services are provided—from placements to organizing the structure of classrooms. Sailor and McCart supported this shift and noted:

One present day argument, which applies to all students identified for services under IDEA but particularly those with the most significant disabilities, is that educators should support a reauthorization that redirects the focus of policy away from *placements* of individual children and instead toward the *structural elements* of a system necessary to ensure that effective instruction and high-quality interventions are readily available for all students, regardless of learning style, disability, or risk factors. . . . The desired result of these systemic changes would be improved services for all students with disabilities, including those students who typically need a greater level of support. (2014, p. 57)

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The authors noted that such a shift, which would result in more inclusive practices, is more than ideology with little evidence to support it. They continued:

Evidence supports inclusive education (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, & King, 2004; Logan & Keefe, 1997; Peetsma, Vergeer, Roeleveld, & Karsten, 2001; Wehmeyer, Lattin, Lapp-Rincker, & Agran, 2003) and indicates improved academic and social outcomes. There is additional evidence indicating a direct benefit to general education students when exposed to practices supporting students with more extensive needs (Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Manset & Semmel, 1997). (2014, pp. 57–58)

Clearly, the idea that students with disabilities, including those with extensive support needs, need to be isolated to be taught is not accurate. It is a misconception.

*Paraprofessionals.* Paraeducators, sometimes called *teaching assistants* or *paraprofessionals*, are integral to inclusive practice. The National Education Association (NEA; 2015) addressed the importance of paraprofessionals, reminding us of the role they play:

“The range and flexibility of paraprofessional positions make it difficult for most folks to understand exactly where our role begins and ends,” says Sandie Blankenship, a special education paraeducator in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. “But I feel like we’re the mortar that fits where it needs to fit to keep the whole structure together.” Across America, paraeducators are indeed “keeping it together” by supporting and strengthening the curriculum taught by teachers, assisting with school instructional programs, and enabling teachers to spend more individualized time with students. (para. 5–6)

Paraeducators are absolutely key to strong inclusive practice. The paraeducator is often the key to how inclusive a student’s education is—by how he or she supports social interactions, makes academic content accessible, and supports the comfort needs of the student in ways that make it acceptable and appropriate that everyone gets what they need in the classroom. It is hard to overstate the importance of the paraeducator for inclusive practice. A wonderful resource for schools is *The Paraprofessional’s Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms* (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

*Family collaboration.* Family collaboration plays a large role in the success of students. Jorgensen et al. (2012) identified the following indicators for meaningful, effective family–school partnerships: family priorities are reflected on IEPs, families and educators recognize each other’s efforts in positive ways, families have the resources and information needed to advocate for their children’s education, families attend meetings on a regular basis at mutually convenient times, and families have access to community-based services that support healthy family functioning. All of this can happen in any setting.

Each of the previous conditions, which are associated with special education, could lead to students’ success. Having a disability or IEP is not necessary for success, however. Rather, these supports can benefit any student. If they are implemented in diverse, inclusive classrooms, then their benefit could be increased and even more students could experience success. With this in mind, we now examine the theoretical foundations underlying inclusion and their practical application.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

This section presents the theoretical grounding for the praxis, or practice, chapters that make up the heart of the book. We begin by reviewing three theoretical foundations of inclusive practice—the way models of disability affect how educators think about teaching, the least dangerous assumption (Jorgensen, 2005), and the idea of full citizenship (Kliewer, 1998).

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## Models of Disability

Rapp and Arndt reviewed three models of disability in their book, *Teaching Everyone* (2012)—the social model, the pity/charity model, and the medical model—that shape how educators think about disability and children with disability labels. New ways of talking about disability and children with disabilities come up, but these three models remain a clear way of separating differences in how educators think about disability at a very foundational level. The models of disability are reviewed below.

### Three Models of Disability

#### The Medical Model

The medical model **perceives disability as abnormal and sick, as an illness that needs treatment by the medical profession.** The field of medicine has been important in diagnosing disorders, finding cures for diseases, educating people about health, and advancing science to support long, healthy lives for people. Immunizations, a healthy diet, getting exercise are a part of our lives because of the field of medicine. At the same time, some professionals in the field of medicine extend the authority of their profession too far. This problem is apparent when doctors try to predict what the life of a person with a disability might be like and tell families that there is no hope, or a child with cerebral palsy will never walk or talk or learn, or a child with Down syndrome cannot live at home. This is not something that can be predicted. If families make decisions about their child's care based on a doctor's overly pessimistic predictions, then that doctor has exerted too much control over that child's future, even if he or she was well intentioned. Historically, this situation has been all too common given society's deference to the medical profession. In addition, when a child with a disability is viewed solely with the medical model, he or she will never be considered a competent, progressing student until the disability is cured and eliminated, making it a constant unrealistic struggle to obtain society's definition of normalcy. The rationale of the medical model is that the medical profession is the best-equipped field to understand and support people with disabilities. But this can be damaging to people with disabilities.

Linton noted, "The disability studies' and disability rights movement's position is critical of the domination of the medical definition and views it as a major stumbling block to the reinterpretation of *disability* as a political category and to the social changes that could follow such a shift" (1998, p. 11). The field of medicine has said that disability is a medical issue—and the general public should not be involved in deciding how people with disabilities should be treated because they are not equipped to decide what is best.

The medical model is intertwined with ideology that the norm is something for which to strive. Davis (1995) explored the way that the norm was constructed and the average became desirable. Once the norm was established, people with disabilities were seen as undesirable and rejected. The medical profession, with the development of genetics and eugenics, took on people with disabilities as a population on which to experiment, which was a relief to the majority population; they could marginalize and ignore people with disabilities, trusting medicine to deal with them. The medical profession was influenced by industrialization and the scientific ideal of the norm and shaped their practice toward eliminating any experience that fell outside a mythical normal part of the bell curve.

#### The Pity/Charity Model

The pity/charity model is a second model for thinking about disability. Jerry Lewis epitomizes the pity model. His telethon to raise funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association includes using terms such as *cripple* and referring to a wheelchair as "that steel imprisonment" (Bennetts, 1993, p. 9). The pity/charity model **constructs people with disabilities as pitiful because they are sick** (Charlton, 1998, pp. 10, 34). It allows people without disabilities to patronize people with disabilities, feeling good about their support and goodwill charity. In fact, many professionals in rehabilitation and special education are motivated by this pity/charity instinct, which makes relationships between people with disabilities and the professionals who work with (and sometimes for) them uneasy. The result is a minimum of accessible housing, transportation, employment, and education. The disability rights movement sees these benefits of membership in society not as gifts, but as rights that need

to be afforded to every member of society as a matter of course. Reframing the pity/charity model includes educating society that every person has the right to clean, safe, affordable housing, transportation, employment, and education.

## The Social Model

As a precursor to the social model, Bogdan and Biklen identified *handicapism* as “a set of assumptions and practices that promote the differential and unequal treatment of people because of apparent or assumed physical, mental, or behavioral differences” (1977, p. 14). Addressing the socially constructed nature of how people with disabilities are treated, they analyze how handicapist attitudes reinforce oppressive practices of labeling and segregation.

The social model is designed to replace the medical and pity/charity models by thinking about disability in a completely new way. Earlier conceptions of disability tended toward an individual, medical, or “personal tragedy” model (Barnes, Oliver, & Barton, 2002, p. 4). A personal tragedy treats disability as an individual issue, one to be managed alone or within the family. The idea that people with disabilities are members of the larger society that has a responsibility to respond to disability or support them was not yet present. The social model of disability **proposes the idea that “disability” is not a product of personal failings, but is socially created . . .** rather than identifying disability as an individual limitation, the social model identifies society as the problem, and looks to fundamental political and cultural changes to generate solutions” (Barnes et al., 2002, p. 5). Winter (2003) proposed that the two premises of the social model are that “people with impairments are disabled by society’s blatant failure to accommodate to their needs” (in Barnes et al., 1999, p. 2) and “people with impairments can and should take control of their own lives as much as possible” (p. 8).

(From Rapp, W. H., & Arndt, K. L. [2012]. *Teaching everyone: An introduction to inclusive education* [pp. 8–10]. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.)

The next two sections review two important concepts—the least dangerous assumption (Jorgensen, 2005) and presuming competence. The chapter then discusses what it means for students to have full citizenship in the classroom.

## The Least Dangerous Assumption



**Handicapism:** “A set of assumptions and practices that promote the differential and unequal treatment of people because of apparent or assumed physical, mental, or behavioral differences” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1977, p. 14).

**Least dangerous assumption:** A standard of practice that “asserts that in the absence of conclusive data educational decisions should be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the student” (Donnellan, 1984, p. 142).

The least dangerous assumption is a way of thinking about students—particularly students with disabilities, although making the least dangerous assumption has broad application—that fundamentally shapes how educators think about teaching. Specifically, the least dangerous assumption “asserts that in the absence of conclusive data educational decisions should be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the student” (Donnellan, 1984, p. 142).

To review the least dangerous assumption, Jorgensen (2005) explained how a prevailing paradigm—a current way of thinking, a shared world view—affects our thinking, particularly about students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are often considered incapable, fragile, and in need of protection from typically developing peers. The results to inclusive practice are devastating when students with disabilities are perceived in this way.

**Common Assumptions About Intellectual Ability** Jorgensen (2005) noted four main prevailing ideas about intelligence and competence. First, intelligence can be reliably measured. Second, intellectual disability means low levels of intelligence. Third, students who have “mental retardation” (the term *intellectual and developmental disabilities* is now used) cannot learn much in general education, so there are limited benefits to attending general education. Fourth, when educators cannot be sure that a student knows, understands, can learn, or has something to say, they presume that the student does not, in fact, know, understand, learn, or communicate.



### Prevailing paradigm:

A shared world view that is strong and institutionalized (Jorgensen, 2015).

**The Impact of Assumptions: Jack's Story** The impact of different assumptions—more dangerous versus less dangerous—can be profound. Nottingham and Dearde (2013) used the least dangerous assumption to change how teachers and aides interacted with Jack, a student with ASD. The researchers found that over a 20-month period, as adult expectations, exposure to language, and literacy tasks increased,

Jack demonstrated his ability to respond to more complex questions. Therefore by increasing his opportunities and reasons to communicate, the under-estimation of his cognitive abilities and literacy skill became evident. We contest that he had the means (ability to point) and cognitive ability to follow instructions prior to our intervention but was not being given the opportunity to demonstrate these as he was dependent on adult choice of activity. (2013, p. 242)

The educational staff who worked with Jack were initially skeptical about the study. They believed that Jack's responses were random, even when he correctly selected words from a printed list and was repeatedly correct. It is hard to challenge a prevailing paradigm, and these school staff were faced with the uncomfortable truth that they had been denying Jack access to academics not out of any ill will but because they were underestimating what he could understand.

The consequences of underestimating Jack are devastating in terms of the lost time he can never get back. Nottingham and Dearde noted that

once he was consistently identifying the correct word from a choice of six, staff began to recognize that Jack could read. The fact that Jack had not been seen by the speech and language therapists working in his school presumably indicates that his language was thought to be at the same level as his cognitive abilities. As Jack was 12 years old by the end of this intervention this mis-apprehension could have deprived him of many years of more appropriate education. (2013, p. 243)

## The Importance of Presuming Competence

The moral of Jack's story is that educators must always presume competence. Educators must assume that if they are unable to tell if a student is able to understand, then the disconnect is on their end—not a lack of capacity on the part of the student. Presuming competence is an attitude—one that shapes actions in the classrooms and includes a default assumption that the student is capable until educators have clear evidence otherwise.

For many years, that clear evidence has been observation that a student may not seem to be paying attention, but educators now know that there are many ways a student might look when paying attention. Clear evidence has been a lack of production—the student is taking in information but is unable to report what he or she is learning in consistent or traditional ways.

The risks of deprivation of opportunity skyrocket when competence is not presumed. Ido Kedar eloquently speaks to the risk. Kedar has autism, and he published a book of essays titled *Ido in Autismland: Climbing Out of Autism's Silent Prison* (2012) when he was a teenager. He noted in a blog post:

My childhood was not easy because I had no means to communicate at all, despite my 40 hours a week of intensive ABA therapy. I pointed to flashcards and I touched my nose, but I had no means to convey that I thought deeply, understood everything, but was locked internally. Meticulously collected data showed my incorrect answers to flashcard drills, but the limitations of theory are in the interpretations.

My mistakes were proof to my instructors of my lack of comprehension or intelligence, so we did the same boring, baby lessons year after boring year. How I dreamed of being able to communicate the truth then to my instructors and my family too, but I had no way to express my ideas. All they gave me was the ability to request foods and basic needs.

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Here is what I would have told them if I could have when I was small. My body isn't under my mind's complete control. I know the right answer to these thrilling flashcards, unfortunately my hand isn't fully under my control either. My body is often ignoring my thoughts. I look at my flashcards. You ask me to touch 'tree,' for example, and though I can clearly differentiate among tree, house, boy and whatever cards you have arrayed, my hand doesn't consistently obey me. My mind is screaming, "Don't touch house!" It goes to house. Your notes say, "Ido is frustrated in session today." Yes, frustration often occurs when you can't show your intelligence and neurological forces impede communication between mind and body and experts then conclude that you are not cognitively processing human speech.

In my childhood I feared I would remain stuck forever in this horrible trap, but I was truly fortunate to be freed when I was 7 when my mother realized my mind was intact, and both my parents searched to find a way to help me communicate without tactile support.

Thousands of autistic people like me live life in isolation and loneliness, denied education, condemned to baby talk and high fives, and never able to express a thought. The price of assuming that nonverbal people with autism have impaired thinking is a high one to families and to people who live in solitary confinement within their own bodies. It is high time professionals rethought their theories. (Kedar, 2014)

Sue Rubin narrates the story of her life in the documentary *Autism Is a World* (Wurzburg & Rubin, 2005). She shares how her family, teachers, and other professionals worked to help her express what she was learning, thinking, and feeling. Over time, and with the use of facilitated communication, Sue learned to type words to express herself.

Prior to age 13, Sue did not communicate with speech; she hurt herself; she did not seem to be understanding anything happening around her. She is a classic example of the kind of child often deemed too disabled to benefit from inclusive education. Sue's family and teachers used the least dangerous assumption with her. They continually provided Sue with access to academic and social opportunities that were age appropriate, even though she was not responding in ways that would demonstrate her cognitive understanding or social engagement, which illustrated her family and support team's willingness to presume competence without evidence. Even if their assumptions had been incorrect, the effect was much less dangerous than depriving her of these opportunities. Sue explains on her web site how her life changed when she started typing to communicate:

In 1991, at age 13, I started typing to communicate, and my entire life changed. I had been labeled as a typical, low-functioning person with autism, and I participated in Special Day classes starting with Infant Stimulation when I was eighteen months old. Living in Whittier, California, I always spent a part of the day in regular classes so I was exposed to regular-education curriculum, but no one knew I was learning, including me. I was so autistic that words floated over my head and made no sense until I started typing to communicate. I then listened with understanding and was able to participate in regular-education classes. (Rubin, 2014, para. 2)

There are many blogs and books by and about people who appear to be severely disabled and incapable of learning at first or second glance. Emma Zurcher-Long (n.d.) is a young woman in New York City whose blog includes a resource of other blogs and posts "Written by Non-Speaking Autistics." A list of blogs by people with ASD is included in the Resources for Inclusion appendix of this book.

## Full Citizenship

Kliewer (1998) conducted qualitative research about schooling and children with Down syndrome, and a model for thinking about how typical children see students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom emerged from that research. He found that full citizenship



**Full citizenship:**

Being a member of the community, including four facets: a belief that one can think, that one is an individual, that reciprocal relationship is possible, and a shared place to be with others (Kliewer, 1998).

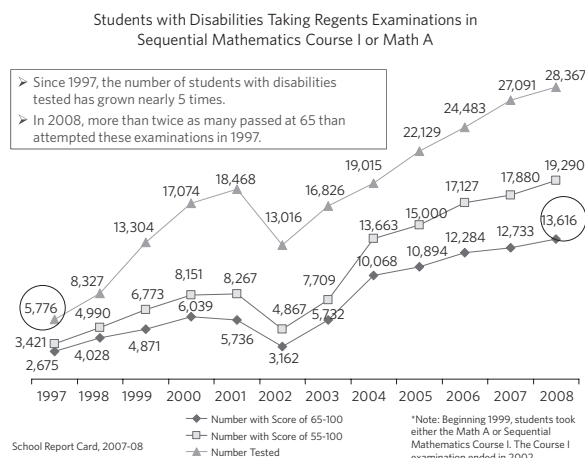
in the classroom—belonging to the class community, being a member of the class—encompasses four facets:

1. A belief in one’s ability to think
2. A belief in one’s individuality
3. A belief in reciprocity of the relationship
4. A shared location.

This section reviews the facets of citizenship and the importance of each in inclusive settings. First, believing that someone can think seems so fundamental. However, some people may have an underlying skepticism about the capacity students with disabilities have to understand information, learn new information, and retain information. Just as girls are often underestimated in math and science in the United States (Shapiro & Williams, 2012), students with disabilities are often underestimated in all academic areas. The evidence of underestimating students with disabilities is undeniable. New York State’s report (Figure 1.1) on the status of students with disabilities is a clear case in point. It is not our intention to single out New York State alone; we believe that similar data, if reported in a similar way, would be exactly the same across the country.

Students with disabilities lacked access to coursework and testing in math in New York State. The percentage of students with disabilities who took the state exam in math gradually rose over a 10-year period. At the same time, the number of students passing the exam also rose. The graph in Figure 1.1 does not show a lack of ability in the earliest reporting years. Rather, it shows a lack of access to academic content and assessment.

Second, everyone is an individual. Yet, students with disabilities are sometimes seen as a label. Statements such as, “All children with Down syndrome are happy” or “Those ADD kids are always wild” are inaccurate, rude, and limit the ability to see each student as a rich, complex, nuanced person with strengths, quirks, weaknesses, and preferences. The ease of stereotyping is strong, and a lack of familiarity with students with disabilities may lead some people to make generalizations where there really should not be generalizations. Inclusive classroom education is essential to decrease the lack of familiarity school personnel have with a range of diverse abilities.



**Figure 1.1.** Increase in access and performance: Students with disabilities in New York State taking a math exam in high school. (From Cort, R. H. [2009]. *The State of Special Education 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/Statewide-Oct09/Oct09statewide.ppt>)

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Third, reciprocity of the relationship means that students with and without disabilities benefit from knowing each other. Sometimes we hear comments about students without disabilities such as, “He is so kind to that kid in his class” or “She really loves helping him out when he needs help with reading.” There is nothing wrong with such statements if those same students without disabilities also recognize the strengths the student with disabilities has and sees him or her as an individual with likes, dislikes, personality, and interests. Reciprocity means that both parties benefit. The prevailing paradigm about students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms is that they benefit from exposure to typically developing peers. What is missing from this paradigm is that students without disabilities also benefit (Grant & Jones-Goods, 2016; Hunt, Hirose-Hatae, Doering, Karasoff, & Goetz, 2000; Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Peck, Staub, Gallucci, & Schwartz 2004). Without this second piece, the risk is that students with disabilities are only the recipients of help; never offering it, never contributing to the community, except to receive support and, by receiving support, make others feel good. This is dangerous for citizenship.

Finally, a shared location means literally that: a place to be together where all meaningfully contribute, are valued for what they bring to the class community, and are missed when they are absent. For some, this means a classroom setting. We hope that is what it means for all children.

## CLASSROOM APPLICATION OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The first half of this chapter introduced ideas that many readers may be familiar with—models of disability, the least dangerous assumption and importance of presuming competence, and citizenship. This section reviews the application of inclusive practices. We defined *praxis* as having two parts: a strong theoretical knowledge base and a strong ability to put theory into practice in the classroom. The second part is where theories are tested and where we get to explore what working from a social model of disability, making the least dangerous assumption, presuming competence, and affirming full citizenship look like in actual practice. Where students hang their coats, where they sit for instruction, who they learn from, and which peers they work with can be a praxis of exclusion or a praxis of inclusion. We advocate for a praxis that celebrates the contributions and abilities of all children. This section reviews four ideas that are highly relevant to a praxis of inclusion: universal design for learning (UDL); response to intervention (RTI) or providing multiple tiers of supports; embedded instruction; and clustering. It also discusses how to address the whole student and all of his or her needs and how to serve all students, including those with different needs.

The discussion about students with disabilities and models of inclusion within the field of education has often been driven almost entirely by special education (Sailor, Doolittle, Bradley, & Danielson, 2009). The conversation has shifted in recent years from special education alone to a shared conversation between special education and general education. Sailor and McCart argued that

it is time for a different approach: a *schoolwide* approach to inclusive education, driven by MTSS [multi-tiered system of support], guided by design teams of both general and special educators, utilizing universal design for learning (UDL) principles, and implemented in a manner resulting in demonstrable gains for *all students*. (2014, p. 59)

Evidence that this kind of approach is possible is easy to see (we hope the same is true for you). For example, a fifth-grade general education teacher we know attended a professional development workshop on how to write IEPs for students with disabilities. He was pleased with the practical skills he learned and commented that the professional development training for IEPs was among the most useful he had ever attended. A general education teacher commenting about the usefulness of IEPs is a great indicator that the



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shift toward inclusive practice has happened; this teacher probably was not writing IEPs 15 or 10 or perhaps even 5 years ago. He is now co-teaching and knows how to think about IEP goals and objectives for the few students in his classroom who benefit from having an IEP. We are hopeful that this example is more typical than not as all schools work to support all students.

We review the current demographics of students served through special education, including low- and high-incidence disabilities and the range of challenges teachers face, in the “Intersection of Expectations and Supports” section. For example, teachers developing inclusive practices for students with needs related to learning disabilities may face different challenges than teachers of students with significant disabilities. Complying with testing requirements or ensuring test accommodations may be different challenges than building portfolios or designing and using test modifications.

For every child who learns in a segregated setting for a particular reason, there is a similar child with similar needs in an inclusive setting. This idea that there is a developmental twin for every child who is segregated is one that helps educators quickly move past all the reasons inclusion is not working in one setting to thinking about how and why it is working in another. That mindset helps educators see possibilities instead of barriers and conceptualize inclusive practice as a systemwide issue instead of an issue specific to one particular student.

Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are available in New York State and can be assigned to any student based on low test scores. This practice is inclusive as all students may get needed support because eligibility for special education is not a requirement.

## Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a term increasingly present in educational settings. This section lays out the foundations of UDL and why it is essential when planning inclusive practices. This review of UDL is excerpted with permission from *Universal Design for Learning in Action: 100 Ways to Teach All Learners* (Rapp, 2014, p. 2):

The National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011) defined UDL as a set of principles to follow when developing a curriculum so that the curriculum meets the needs of every student, giving all students equal opportunities to learn.

As outlined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (PL 110-315), UDL provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, the ways in which students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and the ways in which students are engaged. UDL reduces barriers in instruction and provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges. It also maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.

*Why Universal Design for Learning?* The purpose of UDL is to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom. Students are vastly diverse—in what they learn (what they perceive), how they learn (how they process), and why they learn (what interests and motivates them). If a curriculum is designed with an average student in mind, then it will exclude more students than it includes because students learn in different ways. No two students are alike in their thought processes, learning styles, abilities, and interests.

The National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011) described traditional curricula as having “curricular disabilities” because they are designed only for “average” students and thus fail to meet the needs of real classrooms in which not every student is “average.” These curricula present the content in one or two ways that are accessible to certain students, but they offer limited instructional options. Limited options might mean lecture is the only format or all material is from a textbook. A UDL curriculum identifies all the different ways a curriculum needs to be planned so that it can be accessed by all students. Addressing what, how, and why students learn and understanding what each student would report about what he or she learns empowers educators to create classrooms in which all students are full citizens. It also empowers educators to advocate for students so that their needs are met in all settings.



**Input:** All the different ways students access or take in new information (or, multiple means of representation).

**Output:** All the different ways students demonstrate their learning (or, multiple means of action and expression).

An important distinction must be made here. UDL is not the same as retrofitting (making after-the-fact adaptations) a traditional curriculum. Rather, UDL is a process by which a curriculum is purposefully and intentionally designed right from the start to address diverse needs (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011). This is a philosophical distinction as well as a technical one. The practice of retrofitting means that some students (typically students) were thought of first, and other students (those who need adaptations) were thought of later. It sends the message that the classroom is made for only some, and others need to be worked in. UDL sends the message that the classroom is made for all.

Finally, UDL is valuable because it fosters the development of expert learners. Expert learners understand how they learn best, and thus they do not just receive content but create ways to gain access to content according to their unique needs. These students show that they are resourceful and knowledgeable by activating their own background knowledge to lend it to the learning situation; identifying and using tools and resources for gaining access to new learning; and transforming unfamiliar knowledge into meaningful, useful knowledge. These students show that they are strategic and goal-directed by making plans for learning, organizing effective resources and strategies to be used, and recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses. These students show that they are purposeful and motivated by setting their own challenges, sustaining the effort and persistence needed to achieve the goals, and monitoring their own interest levels and progress toward goals.

### Principles of Universal Design for Learning

There are three primary principles of UDL as originally outlined: 1) provide multiple means of engagement, 2) provide multiple means of representation, and 3) provide multiple means of expression (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011; Rose & Meyer, 2002).

**Provide Multiple Means of Engagement** The first principle for designing a curriculum based on UDL is to use many different ways to engage students in learning. Everyone becomes engaged by different types of tasks and learning situations. Some students prefer working alone, whereas others prefer group work. Some prefer open-ended, highly subjective tasks, whereas others prefer structured, objective tasks. Each student is unique in his or her learning preferences and abilities and in the ways he or she engages in various learning opportunities and accesses information to be learned. To increase engagement, teachers need to catch students' interest, help them sustain effort and persist toward a goal, and help them self-regulate their learning behaviors.

**Provide Multiple Means of Representation** The second principle to follow when designing a curriculum based on UDL is to provide multiple ways of representing the content to be learned. Rapp and Arndt (2012) described this as *input*. If you provide the content in just one way, then only the students who can gain access to it that way are going to benefit. For example, if a teacher lectures to the class, then students who learn easily by listening will have an easy time learning that content. Students who benefit from visuals such as a looking at a PowerPoint slideshow or pictures or showing text on a display will not do as well. Adding visuals to the lecture supports more students. If you present information in multiple ways, then three things happen: 1) more students are going to have access to the new learning, 2) the new information will be reinforced in multiple ways, and 3) students will be more likely to be expert learners because they will be familiar with multiple ways to receive information and thus will know what works best for them so that they can explore a range of ways to learn new information.

**Provide Multiple Means of Action Expression** The third principle to follow when designing a curriculum based on UDL is to provide multiple ways for expression. Rapp and Arndt (2012) described these ways for students to show what they know as *output*. The two most common traditional outputs are writing (e.g., tests, worksheets, essays) and oral responses to teacher-posed questions in class. Although these methods should be continued for the students who are able to demonstrate their learning in these ways, many more options need to be offered as well. To meet the output needs of all learners, options for physical expression, communication, and executive functions (i.e., different ways for organizing, planning, and executing tasks) are essential. Included in this principle is *multiple means of assessment*. It is important to highlight this aspect. Ways in which teachers



### **Culturally responsive**

**teaching:** Teaching by using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them.

evaluate students must vary along with the ways in which students are engaged in learning, materials are represented, and students represent what they know. Areas explored under multiple means of assessment include formal and informal assessment, formative and summative assessment, and alternative assessments.

UDL is inherently culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective. It is teaching to and through the strengths of diverse students (Gay, 2000). It is much more than teaching to a particular race, ethnicity, religion, or other cultural group. It is about connecting with students' cultural learning styles and tools, leveraging the brain's memory and information processing structures, and creating environments that match students' natural ways of learning as well as their lives and backgrounds (Hammond, 2014). Providing multiple means of engagement means connecting with a student's natural way of learning, which comes from his or her cultural background, which is everything about him or her. It is about the groups he or she identifies with, but much more so their individuality within that group. A student's culture includes (and this is not an exhaustive list) his or her race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or spirituality, age, ability, and neurodiversity.

## **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Response to Intervention**

Now that we have reviewed the fundamentals of UDL, we turn to multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and RTI. Our focus is on what needs to be done for all students at all times while acknowledging that some students may need more intensive supports. MTSS and RTI describe how teachers and schools build systems of instructional and behavioral support for all students. Students are supported with increasing intensity as needed within systems of support.

MTSS tiers include three levels: high-quality instruction, evidence-based interventions that are moderate in intensity, and individual intervention that is more intensive than earlier interventions. Having fidelity in implementation and considering the linguistic and cultural needs of all students is key for all three levels (Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research, n.d.b). Data must be collected, reviewed, and used at each level when making decisions about instruction and movement between levels. The Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research (n.d.a) proposed that MTSS is something of an umbrella that integrates supports for academic and behavioral concerns. Under that umbrella, RTI is used to support students' academic needs. The RTI Action Network described RTI this way:

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers, special educators, and specialists. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction. RTI is designed for use when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by child outcome data. (n.d., para 1).

RTI shares fundamental principles with the positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) model. Both are assessment-based, preventative, multitiered support models that are used to solve problems proactively based on individualized student needs (PBIS,



### **Multilevel curriculum:**

Learning opportunities in which diverse students are participating in a shared activity and have individually appropriate learning outcomes (perhaps at different grade levels) in the same curricular area.

### **Curriculum overlapping:**

Learning opportunities in which diverse students are participating in a shared activity and have individually appropriate learning outcomes from different curricular areas.

2017). Similarities across three tiers of intervention include high-quality academic and behavioral instruction and intervention; preventative, proactive strategies and supports; data-based decision making; monitoring of student progress; and team decision making (Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine, 2007).

The third level of interventions are sometimes described as *special education*. We resist this ideologically but respect the need for more resources as student needs intensify. The process of referral for special education services is the way schools can get more services and supports, so we understand the realities of using the special education referral process to provide what students need. The caveat is stressing that *special education* is defined as a set of services and supports, not a location.

The fundamental pieces of both frameworks are that general education teachers are more responsible for monitoring students' progress and changing their teaching regularly if students are not showing gains, general and special education teachers work much more closely together than in the past, and the lines between general and special education are blurred because all teachers work to support all students, and the interventions are not location specific and can benefit a wide variety of learners, regardless of their label.

## **Embedded Instruction**

Embedding instruction is a teaching strategy in which students who need supports for full participation in inclusive classrooms are given opportunities to practice individual goals and objectives within an activity or event, during whole-class or small-group instruction, in a manner that expands, modifies, or adapts the activity/event while remaining meaningful and interesting (Horn, Lieber, Li, Sandall, & Schwartz, 2000). Embedded instruction offers an alternative to the viewpoint that IEP goals should be separate and unrelated to the goals and objectives for all learners in a classroom and addressed in separate, special education settings that focus on IEP goals and objectives in isolation and often individually. Instead, IEP goals should be developed to meet the needs and interests of the learner (or groups of learners with similar needs and interests) in a way that is immediately meaningful and functional in the variety of everyday school contexts.

There are several ways to implement embedding, including arranging the classroom environment to be receptive to diverse learner needs, adapting materials, adding new components to existing activities, providing performance cues, and providing special assistance or support. Using the mindset of embedded instruction supports the belief that "implementation of the IEP goals should neither supplant the classroom curriculum nor restrict the child's participation in classroom activities. Implementation should occur within the context of the existing classroom activities and routines" (Horn et al., 2000, p. 208).

Giangreco (2017) described multilevel curriculum and curriculum overlapping. *Multilevel curriculum* means all students' learning outcomes are in the same curricular area. *Curriculum overlapping* means the students' learning outcomes might be in different areas. In both cases, a heterogeneous group of students, with a proportionate number of students with disabilities, is working together interdependently on a shared activity in order to reach appropriate learning outcomes (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

## **Clustering**

Clustering is a key focus for this text. We focus on the concept of clustering student needs to better meet individual student needs as we address differentiation in instructional planning. Teachers who use clustering continuously reflect on key student patterns of learning and plan instruction to address the patterns of learning, as opposed to focusing merely

on individual needs, which can be overwhelming and unattainable for a teacher in daily planning. Flexible patterns of grouping may include grouping by skill level, interest, or preferred method of response. Focusing on the patterns of student interests and strengths will benefit many students for a variety of reasons (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Teachers in cluster classrooms were naturally driven to implement differentiation strategies, breaking the flawed practice of teaching to the middle, which often leaves patterns of student learning need unaddressed (Pierce et al., 2011). Clustering provides for an educational context that not only supports, but also implicitly mandates, differentiated instruction for all learners and promotes gains for all students. Effective clustering allows all students to engage in moderately challenging curriculum that is modified to allow for learning differences among the students in the classroom.

## ADDRESSING THE WHOLE STUDENT: ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND COMFORT NEEDS

Addressing the whole student means considering all purposes of inclusive supports—academic supports, social supports, and comfort supports. Academic supports focus on academic progress, such as providing a calculator, extended time to take tests, a copy of notes, or a second set of textbooks to keep at home. Social supports attend to the relational piece of schooling, perhaps providing opportunities for partner work, a social skills class, or access to after-school clubs and activities with support. Comfort supports are those that help the student do his or her best work and are unique to the student. Sue Rubin is clear that she benefits from holding plastic spoons in one hand at times. Although it may not seem necessary to report this support on an IEP, it might support her success if everyone is clear that spoons are comforting and are not to be thrown away or taken away from her. A second example Sue talks about in *Autism Is a World* (Wurtzburg & Rubin, 2005) was having a helmet available to her when the urge to hit her head was strong. She could ask for it or put it on herself until the urge lessened. Treating Sue as competent included identifying and honoring her comfort needs and supporting her in deciding when and where to use them (Wurtzburg & Rubin, 2005).

Sometimes academic supports may be stressful on a student (e.g., a student having extra transitions in and out of the classroom because the team is working to get him or her to all the places they think he or she needs to be). Figure 1.2 shows how all three areas need to be supported together for most effective inclusion. A student who is able to do his or her best work in a safe space is in the intersection of all three supports. It is this intersection that needs to be provided for all students.

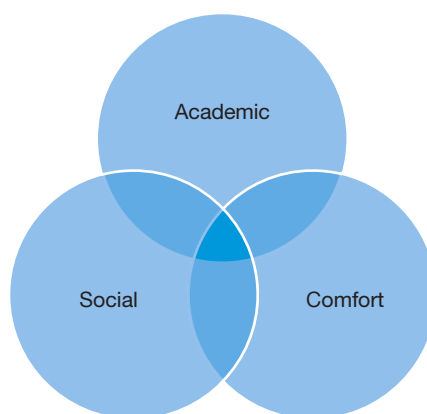


Figure 1.2. Academic, social, and comfort needs.

## INTERSECTION OF EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Expectations and supports for students are essential if all students are going to be challenged and included. Expectations and the levels of support provided can range from low to high. Varying combinations of low and high expectations and support are seen in Figure 1.3.

Exclusion from general education classrooms and even neighborhood schools altogether results when there are low expectations and low levels of support for students (lower left quadrant). The assumption is that students with disabilities, particularly those with very complex learning needs, are unable to learn, so they have no place in schools with typically developing children. People come to believe that students with disabilities are scary or bad because they do not see and know students with disabilities. Teachers who do not teach students with disabilities may have a similar sense—students with disabilities are scary or not worth spending time teaching. They are essentially treated as aliens instead of peers (Kliewer, 1998). The idea of being alien is that the students with disabilities may be viewed as so different from other students that they are not even regarded as fully human—they are seen as something altogether different; the result is a sense that they do not need challenging activities or meaningful social relationships. Students stagnate in these settings and show little to no progress because they are neither expected nor supported to do so.

The result is still not positive for students who experience low expectations and high support (lower right quadrant). In these cases, students with disabilities might be enrolled in neighborhood schools, but they are likely placed in separate special education classrooms. Even if students with disabilities are placed in the general education classroom for part of the school day, they are still often segregated from peers working on different activities or curriculum because there are few expectations for academic or social success. Students with disabilities are often segregated from peers in academic classes; we have heard about students being prohibited from enrolling in academic classes. We believe that this happens because the assumption that students cannot meet high expectations is powerful. Statistics about educational placements clearly show a lack of inclusive placement for students with the most complex support needs. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education noted “that children with multiple disabilities have minimal exposure to the general education classroom with nearly 70% of those spending less than 39% of their time in general education classroom, 25% of whom are in completely segregated settings” (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p. 58). By 2015, those percentages improved for many students, but not all. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2017,

<p><b>High expectations/low support</b></p> <p>Mainstreaming Squatters Medical model Some students have to prove they can learn Disability = general inability (so they are out)</p>	<p><b>High expectations/high support</b></p> <p>Full inclusion Citizenship and reciprocity Social model All students can learn Disability = challenge, opportunity, difference</p>
<p><b>Low expectations/low support</b></p> <p>Exclusion Aliens Some students can learn Disability = bad, scary</p>	<p><b>Low expectations/high support</b></p> <p>Segregation Squatters Pity/charity model Some students can learn Disability = general inability (so typically developing peers must help)</p>

**Figure 1.3.** Expectations and supports for students.

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About 95 percent of students ages 6–21 served under IDEA in fall 2015 were enrolled in regular schools. . . . In fall 2015, the percentage of students served under IDEA who spent most of the school day in general classes was highest for students with speech or language impairments (87 percent). Approximately two-thirds of students with specific learning disabilities (70 percent), visual impairments (67 percent), other health impairments (65 percent), and developmental delays (64 percent) spent most of the school day in general classes. In contrast, 16 percent of students with intellectual disabilities and 13 percent of students with multiple disabilities spent most of the school day in general classes. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, p. 7)

The pity/charity model is often at play here, and the underlying belief is that disability is general inability. The result is that students without disabilities are often asked and encouraged to be helpers for the students with disabilities, who are typically visitors to general education. The ideology is that students with disabilities need support, and others do things for them instead of providing supports. Kliewer (1998) talked about this way of thinking. He found that students who were in classrooms with this mindset in place were not aliens—they were known, but they were not citizens. They inhabited a place on the fringe, squatting on the sidelines—squatters, not participants. Students with disabilities in this quadrant notice they are not held to the same expectations as their typically developing peers and may feel that they are so different and damaged that they are not worth the teacher’s effort. Many segregated special education classrooms are founded on the beliefs in this quadrant—there is a great deal of support in time, energy, and funding. What is missing is the belief that students with disabilities are capable and should be held to high expectations and supported to be as independent as possible, should be engaged with the general education curriculum, and should be working with peers to learn.

Students who experience high expectations and low support (upper left quadrant) are also squatters. In this context, students are placed (or dumped) in general education settings with very few supports or accommodations in place to help them be successful. Based on the medical model of disability, the belief is that students with disabilities are sick or broken and must be fixed to fit the environment. They must prove that they can learn or they will be segregated again, but they are left to their own devices to prove this. Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier (2010) pointed out that this undermines the concept of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow proposed that there are five motivational needs: physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Needs are hierarchical; lower needs must be addressed before higher needs are influential (Neukrug, Brace-Thompson, Maurer, & Harman, 2015). Basic survival needs are at the bottom, and full self-actualization and realization of one’s potential are at the top. The hierarchy establishes that a sense of belonging is needed in order to achieve. Yet, students with disabilities are often expected to achieve before they may belong (Jorgensen et al., 2010), which is evident in the context of high expectations and low support. When left unsupported, students unsurprisingly fail or act out, and the conclusion is drawn that inclusion does not work.

The combination of high expectations with high supports (upper right quadrant) is potent—students are expected to learn, full inclusion is enacted, and disability is seen as a challenge, an opportunity, and a difference. It is this combination that we hope to support with this book by providing practical ways to enact inclusive practices and teach all students. The theoretical grounding for this book is based on the social model of disability and full citizenship in the classroom. Throughout the book, we stand by our unwavering belief that all students can learn and disability means challenge, opportunity, and difference. We have high expectations and presume competence of all students. Supports are provided through the practices of UDL, RTI, embedded instruction, and clustering in order to accommodate the whole child.

# Portraits of Inclusion

## Three Diverse Classrooms

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Chapters 2, 3, and 4 present three fictional classes: first, third, and fifth grade. The student profiles (snapshots) in this section provide background and information about each of the 20 students in each fictional class. Some students have formal disability labels with an individualized education program (IEP), some have learning needs that are not formally labeled, and some students are English as a new language (ENL) learners. All are unique and have their own stories—family lives, preferences, personalities, strengths, and needs.

We use terms related to English and ENL learners, including the five stages of language development. The designated performance levels in New York State are entering, emerging, transitioning, expanding, and commanding. Each level has clear descriptions for listening, reading, speaking, and writing (EngageNY, n.d.).

We use content-specific language in lesson planning as well. We talk about reading and instructional or independent levels in the English language arts (ELA) lessons; each is determined through regular assessment of reading. Independent level reading is just that—reading that can be done by the student alone. Instruction level material is more challenging, and the student needs support and guidance from the teacher to master it. We considered strategies such as giving end-of-unit assessments as a preassessment for students who are gifted and talented, so students who already know the content can move on to the next unit instead of reviewing material that is already mastered. A second strategy is compacting the material—providing new content at a faster pace with less repetition. Both can be valuable tools in the classroom. Each lesson plan is comprehensive in scope. Figure I.1 outlines the content and structure of each plan.

We use a range of materials and formats in the lessons that we think will be familiar. For example, we use rubrics with “I can” statements, and learning activities in the lesson plans include an anticipatory set, modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and closure. Other examples include varied ways of providing input (e.g., picture books, grade-level texts, slideshows) and multiple options for student output (written or verbal responses, self-assessments, drawing, puzzles).