

## District Support for School Leaders Anchor Presentation Part 7

### Overview for Facilitators

The CEEDAR Center is pleased to provide this presentation that addresses background information regarding district support for school leaders. The materials are designed for a preservice course or for professional development. Consistent with the Common Core Standards, this resource is designed to increase school leaders' abilities to improve student readiness for college and careers.

### Speaker Notes

The speaker notes are what the facilitator can say, verbatim, to explain each slide and the activities. The notes are provided as a guide that speakers will modify as needed. Directions and notes for the facilitator, not to be said aloud, are in italics.

There are no handouts for this CEM. There are web-based activities, videos, and a summative jigsaw discussion:

Activity 1: Targeting Student Outcomes

Video 1: Using a District Policy Framework

Activity 2: Examining District Priorities

Activity 3: Monitoring Progress

Video 2: Building Strong School and District Relationships

Video 3: Achieving Cohesive and Inclusive Leadership

Jigsaw Discussion: Working with District Leaders

Presentation slides with speaker notes

### Objectives

1. Connecting school leaders to district priorities
2. Including students with disabilities in district priorities
3. Providing cohesive and inclusive leadership for all learners

### Outline of Session with Activities and Approximate Time

The session is designed for approximately 3 hours

Topic	Slides	Activity	Time in minutes
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-4</b>		<b>10</b>
District leadership support	2-3	Discuss objectives	10
<b>I. Connecting school leadership to district</b>	<b>5-13</b>		<b>65</b>

<b>priorities</b>			
Educational policy framework	6		5 min
Using a district policy framework	6	Video & brief reflections/comments — <i>District Policy Framework</i> (Swift Center, 2015)	5 min (Video 1.54 min Comments, 3-4 min)
District leadership in action	8-10		10
Targeting student outcomes	11	Web video, text, & reflections/discussion— <i>Leaders to Learn from: Deputy District Superintendent Josh Garcia</i> ( <i>Education Week, 2015</i> )	15 (Video 2.15 min; plus discussion)
Examining district priorities	12	Web-based Activity—Examine how priorities listed on district websites are defined and assessed. Reflections/discussion	25 min
Reflecting on school & district connections	13	Brief reflections	5 min
<b>II. Including students with disabilities in school district priorities</b>	<b>14-19</b>		<b>40</b>
Building strong school & district relationships	15	Video & brief reflections/comments — <i>Strong School &amp; District Relationships</i> (Swift Center (2015)	5 (Video 1.47 min Comments, 3-4 min)
Working with special education administrators to improve instruction	16-18		10
Monitoring student progress to improve outcomes	19	Web-based Activity: Review priorities in the district's strategic plan and recommendations for improving outcomes for students with disabilities (link to district reports)	25

<b>BREAK</b>			<b>15</b>
<b>III. Providing inclusive &amp; coherent leadership for all learners</b>	<b>20-31</b>		<b>55</b>
Leading effective collaboration	21-29		25
Achieving cohesive and inclusive leadership	30	Video & brief reflections/comments — <i>Our Cohesive Approach--Santiago High School Story</i>	15 (video 7.56 min plus comments)
Working with district leaders	31	Activity—Jig saw discussion	15

### **Suggested Follow-Up Professional Learning Opportunities**

In professional learning communities, study a selection of the following:

#### **Books & Monographs:**

1. Billingsley, B., McLeskey, J., & Crockett, J. B. (2014). *Principal leadership: Moving toward inclusive and high-achieving schools for students with disabilities* (Document No. IC-8). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website: <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/innovation-configurations/>
2. Bateman, D. F., & Bateman, C. F. (2014). *A principal's guide to special education*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.
3. Campbell-Whatley, G. D. & Lyons, J. E. (2013). *Leadership practices for special and general educators*. New York: Pearson.
4. Crockett, J., Billingsley, B., & Boscardin, M. (2012). *Handbook of leadership and administration for special education*. New York: Routledge.
5. Knapp, M. S., Honig, M. I., Plecki, M. L., Portin, B. ., & Copland, M. A. (2014). *Learning-focused leadership in action: Improving instruction in schools and districts*. New York: Routledge.

#### **Articles & Book Chapters:**

1. Deshler, D. D., & Cornett, J. (2012). Leading to improve teacher effectiveness: Implications for practice, reform, research, and policy. In J. B Crockett, B. S.

- Billingsley, & M. L. Boscardin (Eds.), *Handbook of leadership and administration for special education* (pp. 239-259). New York: Routledge.
2. Green, J. A. (2008). Now is a critical time for principals and special educators to work together to serve the needs of all children. *Principal*, 88(2), 12-15.
  3. Harry, B. (2012). Leadership and collaboration in home-school partnerships. In J. B. Crockett, B. S. Billingsley, & M. L. Boscardin (Eds.) *Handbook of leadership & administration for special education* (pp. 209-222). New York, NY: Routledge.
  4. Kozleski, E., & Huber, J. J. (2012). System-wide leadership for culturally-responsive education. In J. B. Crockett, B. S. Billingsley, & M. L. Boscardin (Eds.) *Handbook of leadership & administration for special education* (pp. 155-169). New York, NY: Routledge.
  5. Louis, K., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K., & Anderson, S. (2010). *Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
  6. McLaughlin, M. J., Smith, A. F., & Wilkinson, T.G. (2012) Challenges for leaders in the not-so-new era of standards. In Crockett, J. B., Billingsley, B. S., & Boscardin, M.L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Leadership and Administration for Special Education*, pp. 361-376. New York, NY: Routledge.
  7. Yell, M. L., Thomas, S. S., & Katsiyannis, A. (2012). Special education law for leaders and administrators of special education. In Crockett, J. B., Billingsley, B. S., & Boscardin, M. L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Leadership and Administration for Special Education* (pp. 3-16). New York, NY: Routledge.

## **Speaker Notes**

### **Slide 1— School Leadership for Students with Disabilities**

In this seventh PowerPoint presentation, we provide an overview of the importance of district leadership and the ways in which learning-focused district support can help school leaders improve instruction for students with disabilities in their schools. The goal of this CEM is to emphasize how supports from district leaders, including local special education administrators (LSEAs), can help principals address academic learning and life outcomes for their students with disabilities.

The evidence is clear: Principals are critical to the success of students with disabilities. But principals can't effectively act alone. Students' academic learning and life outcomes improve when state and district policies align with school-wide

commitments to high-quality instruction for all learners (Deshler & Cornett, 2012; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

## **Slide 2—Overview**

This is the last part of the CEM module on School Leadership.

## **Slide 3—Objectives**

This CEM module has three sections and targets three objectives:

1. Connecting school leaders to district priorities
2. Including students with disabilities in district priorities
3. Providing cohesive and inclusive leadership for all learners

In targeting these objectives, we consider the following questions:

- Who, or what, supports school leaders who are working to support teaching and learning?
- What must school and district leaders keep in mind to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
- What structures, activities, and practices help school and district leaders to provide consistent, collaborative, and coherent leadership?

## **Slide 4— Looking through the Lens of System-wide Leadership**

Collaboration among leaders across the educational system—from the classroom to the boardroom--is integral to supporting effective teaching and learning.

Please take a few minutes to discuss the following question: What is your experience with system-wide leadership for instruction in your school district?

## **Slide 5—Connecting School Leaders to District Priorities**

*(Introducing CEM Section 1)* Relationships among parents and leaders across all levels of the educational system are interconnected in a complex and changing policy environment, and these stakeholders need to engage in mutually supportive ways for student outcomes to improve (Crockett, 2002; Harry, 2012; Knapp et al., 2014; Louis et al., 2010). In this section of the CEM we look at how challenges facing principals become more manageable with system-wide leadership-teams that oversee focused initiatives and monitor agreed-upon practices.

## **Slide 6—Educational Policy Framework**

In the educational policy framework, student learning both influences and is influenced by federal and state education policies, which shape the work of school districts, that in turn shape the work of principals and practitioners within the local context of their schools (Kozleski & Huber, 2012). The goal at every level of the

system is to ensure consistent, coherent, and collaborative leadership for a coordinated education that improves learning for all students.

Aligning federal and state policies with district policies from the boardroom to the classroom and using data to make decisions can help support student success. For example, in schools where principals successfully use multi-tiered systems for academic and behavioral supports to help all students learn, traditional boundaries between general and special education become blurred as students move across a continuum of increasingly intensive interventions to receive the support they need (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). A coherent, integrated, and well aligned system can't occur without strong support from state and district leaders

### **Slide 7—Using a District Policy Framework**

*This brief video (1.54 min.) was created by the SWIFT Center, a national K-8 center that provides academic and behavioral support to promote the learning and academic achievement of all students, including students with disabilities and those with the most extensive needs. This film focuses on a portion of the larger framework in showing how LEA (or District) policy promotes and sustains a system where every student participates meaningfully in all social and instructional settings (<http://www.swiftschools.org/>).*

After watching the video, briefly discuss this question-- Which actions taken by these leaders struck you as particularly important to improving instruction?

### **Slide 8—District Leadership Support**

Research reveals district leadership is essential to supporting student achievement. This slide illustrates district leadership support in a variety of ways.

### **Slide 9—Ways of Assisting Principals**

*Merideth Honig, a professor of educational policy and leadership at the University of Washington, urges all district departments—including special education and student services--to strengthen their commitment to academic priorities. Here is one example of her work:*

*Honig, M. I. (2012). District central office leadership as teaching: How central office administrators support principals' development as instructional leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 733-774.*

*Here is a link to Honig's Central Office Transformation Toolkit designed to support principals lead change through learning-focused partnerships with district leaders that support improved instruction:*

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/district-policy-and-practice/Pages/Central-Office-Transformation-Toolkit.aspx>

### **Slide 10—District Leadership in Action**

This slide quotes Josh Garcia, who was selected as a *Leader to Learn From* in 2015 by *Education Week* newspaper. In his district of Tacoma, WA, whole-child data are available in an interactive online format that facilitates analysis by poverty, race, grade level, and other indicators. School-level data are not available online, though. District administrators use that data internally to work with schools in improving instruction and supporting student success.

The Tacoma School District is engaged in a 10-year partnership with the University of Washington Tacoma's Center for Strong Schools called the *Tacoma Whole Child Initiative*. The initiative trains teachers and other staff members how to use data and university research to:

- Change the culture in schools,
- Reduce classroom behavior distractions,
- Provide more support for students, and
- Increase graduation rates.

### **Slide 11—Activity 1: Targeting Student Outcomes**

*Please read Josh Garcia's story and watch the brief video (2min 15 sec) from Lessons from the Leader (Gewirtz, 2015. Retrieved from*

<http://leaders.edweek.org/profile/josh-garcia-whole-child-accountability-tacoma-washington/>

(Main URL: <http://leaders.edweek.org/leaders/2015/> )

Author Gewirtz identifies the following themes in the story. As you read, please consider what these themes mean for educating students with a variety of needs that affect their academic learning, emotional and social growth, and functional independence.

- **Defining and Measuring Success:** Educators need to grapple with questions about how to measure life and social outcomes, as well as rigorous academics.
- **Being Upfront:** Helping the community acknowledge that data had not been collected that could have been used to measure students' progress.
- **Facing New Accountability:** Helping leaders throughout the district meet the ongoing challenge of changing familiar ways of doing business in schools.

### **Slide 12—Activity 2: Examining District Policies**

*Directions for this activity are on this slide. This activity could be designed for participants to do alone or in small groups.*

### **Slide 13—Lessons from the Leader**

*This slide concludes Section 1 of this CEM. Josh Garcia’s words illustrate the following point: Coherent and inclusive leadership from principals and central office personnel can take and shape actions that improve learning and life outcomes for students with disabilities.*

### **Slide 14—Including Students with Disabilities in District Priorities**

*(Introducing CEM Section 2)* In this section we look at school and district relationships to see how results-driven accountability is changing the ways that local special education administrators interact with principals to promote a shared vision and foster excellent and inclusive teaching and learning.

### **Slide 15—Building Strong School and District Relationships**

This SWIFT video (1.47 minutes) illustrates how effective district leaders integrate policy and build capacity across the system for extending and sustaining new initiatives that target equitable educational opportunities for all learners.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH2DUYi6ywM>

After watching the video, briefly discuss this question: Which actions taken by these leaders struck you as particularly important for improving instruction?

### **Slide 16—Working with Special Education Administrators**

All school systems have one or more district-level administrators with expertise in special services and research-based practices for children with disabilities. Special education administrators are well positioned to be a key force in helping principals provide effective, inclusive instruction.

### **Slides 17—Leadership for Results Driven Accountability**

Leadership responsibilities have evolved along with expectations for students with disabilities to achieve meaningful learning and life outcomes. Traditionally too much emphasis was placed on procedural compliance without considering how IDEA requirements impact student learning outcomes. But now a more balanced approach to determining program effectiveness is necessary. Under a results-driven model of accountability, compliance with IDEA still needs to be addressed, and procedural safeguards for children and families remain unchanged. States will continue to monitor performance—but with a focus on helping schools and districts improve results for students with disabilities

([www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo\\_items/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/) )

This integrated vision of accountability increases the interdependence among state, district, and school leaders working together to align policies and practices in ways that best support improving results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, and their families.



## **Slide 18—Key Points**

Studies and stories of leadership in schools and districts often overlook students with disabilities or the support principals need to be able to use evidence-based practices necessary for their success. What's needed are examples of leadership for improving instructional outcomes for all learners—including students with disabilities-- in inclusive schools.

## **Slide 19—Activity 3: Monitoring Progress**

*(Web-based Activity concluding Section 2)* Review priorities in the district's strategic plan (*web link is on this slide*) and recent recommendations for improving outcomes for students with disabilities located in web-based quarterly reports on the progress of students with disabilities. These reports are generated in partnership with the Urban Collaborative <http://www.urbancollaborative.org/>, a national organization supporting special education leadership.

## **Slide 20—Providing Cohesive and Inclusive Leadership for All Learners**

*(Introducing CEM Section 3)* In this section we examine ways in which principals and special education administrators work together to create cohesive and inclusive instructional leadership for all learners.

## **Slide 21—Leading Effective Collaboration**

- LSEAs serve as advocates for students with disabilities from a diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They also monitor and ensure compliance with disability policies intended to protect students from discrimination and provide equitable and meaningful opportunities to learn.
- LSEAs foster the use of effective instructional and behavioral interventions, use of assistive technologies, and positive relationships with parents and professionals in schools and community agencies.
- LSEAs' responsibilities include collaborating with others to solve complex problems, make data-based decisions, and manage fiscal and human resources to better align the delivery of inclusive instruction across schools.

LSEAs are expected to span boundaries between general and special education throughout the school system by sharing their expertise with school leaders as well as with district colleagues (Crockett, 2011; Lashley & Boscardin, 2003; Pazy & Yates, 2012).

## **Slide 22—Aligning Policies and Practices**

LSEA's are in a position to align school practices with district policies for educating students with disabilities. By Integrating multiple initiatives and coordinating services to respond to students' unique educational needs, LSEAs can help

principals support general and special education teachers to work differently as they share responsibilities for teaching complex material to all learners, including students with disabilities.

### **Slide 24—Examples of Alignment**

*In addition to examples on this slide, ask participants for some other examples.*

### **Slide 24—Informing Complex Decisions**

LSEAs can help principals negotiate complicated rules and regulations. Principals must be knowledgeable about special education policies, but LSEAs are responsible for ensuring compliance.

*There are many resources addressing moral dilemmas and legal and fiscal facets of special education that can inform principals' decisions about complex ethical and legal decisionmaking (Baker, Green, & Ramsey, 2012; Gooden, Eckes, Mead, McNeil, & Torres, 2013; Shapiro & Stepkavich, 2011; Yell, Thomas, & Katsiyannis, 2012)*

*Professional associations can also help. The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) is an international professional educational organization affiliated with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), whose members are dedicated to the enhancement of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual in society. Check the CASE website for a listing of beliefs and ethical principles that guide the practice of special education leaders: <http://casecec.org/about/>*

### **Slide 25—Examples of Complex Decisions**

*In addition to examples on this slide, ask participants for some other examples.*

### **Slide 26—Supporting Effective Instruction**

LSEAs can also help school personnel overcome misunderstandings about disabilities and how they can affect learning, as well as how to use differentiated and effective instructional practices in teaching academic content to widely diverse learners (Brownell et al., 2010). LSEAs can also work jointly with principals to retain effective special education teachers and develop their knowledge and skills (Billingsley, 2011).

### **Slide 27—Examples of Instructional Support**

LSEAs can also buffer principals from distractions that interfere with instructional leadership tasks by disrupting time available to support learning.

*In addition to examples on this slide, ask participants for some other examples.*

### **Slide 28—Strengthening Relationships**

LSEAs are typically experienced in working with external partners, and in developing ongoing relationships from pre-school through high school with families of children with disabilities, which puts them in a good position to share their expertise with school leaders (Green, 2008).

### **Slide 29—Examples of Strengthening Relationships**

*In addition to examples on this slide, ask participants for some other examples.*

### **Slide 30—Achieving Cohesive & Inclusive Leadership (video)**

In schools with weak leadership, negativity easily spreads along with assumptions that a child's disabilities are rooted in the home (Harry, 2012). Enacting a collaborative, cohesive, family-centered model of education, that is responsive to consumers and enhancing of their competencies, is a requirement of the IDEA, as is linking with local leaders to facilitate transitions to post-secondary education, independent living, and productive employment (Test, Mazzotti, & Mustian, 2012).

*Video: 7.56 min Published on May 22, 2014*

*Michael Fullan, with the support of the Garden Grove Unified School District, films Principal Lila Rene Jenkins, district staff, teachers, and students to capture their success at Santiago High School in Garden Grove, California. This video is part of what Fullan calls Motion Leadership in Action*

*(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B7rv3SRWr4>)*

### **Slide 31—Working with District Leaders**

*Jigsaw discussion: Divide participants into 3 groups. Each group will address one of the 3 sections of this CEM addressing these questions:*

- 1. What were the most important things you learned in this section of the module?*
- 2. What questions remain and what would you like to know more about?*

*Bring the groups together. Ask one member of the group to share the top three items mentioned in their small groups*

*From these items, discuss as a group the key things principals must keep in mind to work effectively with other school and district leaders to ensure students with disabilities receive meaningful opportunities to learn the academic, technical, and personal skills to thrive in a complex world.*

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