

Principal Leadership: Moving Toward Inclusive and High-Achieving Schools for Students With Disabilities



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June 2017 (revision)
CEEDAR Document No. IC-8



Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

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This content was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H325A120003. Bonnie Jones and David Guardino serve as the project officers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this website is intended or should be inferred.

Recommended Citation:

Billingsley, B., McLeskey, J., & Crockett, J. B. (2017). *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/>

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Innovation Configuration for Principal Leadership for Students With Disabilities

This paper features an innovation configuration (IC) matrix that can guide principal leadership professionals toward inclusive and high-achieving schools for students with disabilities. This matrix appears in Appendix A.

An IC is a tool that identifies and describes the major components of a practice or innovation. Implementing any innovation comes with a continuum of configurations of implementation from non-use to the ideal. ICs are organized around two dimensions: essential components and degree of implementation (Hall & Hord, 1987; Roy & Hord, 2004). Essential components of the IC—along with descriptors and examples to guide application of the criteria to course work, standards, and classroom practices—are listed in the rows of the far left column of the matrix. Several levels of implementation are defined in the top row of the matrix. For example, no mention of the essential component is the lowest level of implementation and would receive a score of zero. Increasing levels of implementation receive progressively higher scores.

ICs have been used to develop and implement educational innovations for at least 30 years (Hall & Hord, 2001; Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newton, 1975; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Roy & Hord, 2004). Experts studying educational change in a national research center originally developed these tools, which are used for professional development (PD) in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The tools have also been used for program evaluation (Hall & Hord, 2001; Roy & Hord, 2004).

Using this tool to evaluate course syllabi can help teacher preparation leaders ensure that they emphasize proactive, preventative approaches instead of exclusive relying on behavior reduction strategies. The IC included in Appendix A of this paper is designed for teacher preparation programs, although it can be modified as an observation tool for PD purposes.

The Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center ICs are extensions of the seven ICs that the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) originally created. NCCTQ professionals wrote the above description.



Reflective of our democratic values, all children living in the United States are eligible to receive a public school education. Some children have widely divergent cultural backgrounds and atypical levels of development that make learning a challenge for them, but inclusive school leaders believe that each student has promise. Some students have cognitive or physical disabilities, with some students needing only minor physical accommodations in classrooms to ensure their equal access to learning and other students, who may be eligible for special education and highly intensive interventions, requiring specially designed instruction that addresses their individual educational needs. With appropriately intensive and effective instruction, many more students with disabilities than previously thought can achieve to high academic standards (McLaughlin, 2009; McLaughlin, Smith, & Wilkinson, 2012), defined by the vast majority of the states as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, www.corestandards.org).

This research synthesis, supported by the CEEDAR Center at the University of Florida, is consistent with the CEEDAR Center's responsibility to restructure and improve both teacher and leadership preparation programs while encouraging the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in inclusive classrooms and schools. The CEEDAR Center's major knowledge development activity is to identify practices that will help state education agencies (SEAs) coordinate with institutions of higher education (IHEs), local education agencies (LEAs), and non-profits to integrate EBPs into their preparation and practice. Therefore, in this review, we have synthesized what we know about principal leadership as it relates to improving the educational outcomes of students with disabilities in inclusive schools.



Principal Leadership and Students With Disabilities

Principals have critical roles in developing and supporting inclusive schools that improve student outcomes for students with disabilities (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) and the latest reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) expect that students with disabilities will be taught the same content and achieve the same mandated standards as all students. The only exceptions are for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who must meet alternate achievement standards. Students with disabilities also participate in annual assessments, and the results for these students must be disaggregated. Students with disabilities are also expected to participate to the greatest extent possible in the same schools and classrooms as their peers without disabilities. Recent research indicates that the proportion of students with disabilities who spend 80% or more of the school day in general education classrooms has substantially increased from 34% in 1990 to 61% in 2011 (McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Although students with disabilities are being included to a greater extent (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012) and are making some improvements on state mandated tests (Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Lazarus, 2012), low levels of academic achievement and poor post-school outcomes for students with disabilities signal that more must be done to improve their learning opportunities (see Feng & Sass, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Moreover, principals need to support general and special education teachers in developing more effective inclusive schools by increasing the use of EBPs that are effective in raising student achievement levels (IDEA, 2004; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, & Algozzine, 2014; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012).



For the purpose of this paper, we consider inclusive schools to be “places where students with disabilities are valued and active participants and where they are provided supports needed to succeed in the academic, social, and extra-curricular activities of the school” (McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al., 2014, p. 4). An emerging body of literature demonstrates the work of principals as they create the conditions necessary to build and support inclusive practices in their schools (e.g., Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). In school-reform studies, principals directed their efforts toward fostering an inclusive vision, building capacity of school staff to meet the needs of students through PD, and creating the work contexts that facilitated collaboration and instructional accommodations and modifications as well as progress monitoring (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Shogren et al., 2015; Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd, 2011). Some research emphasized the importance of distributed and shared leadership among principals, teachers, and parents in developing and sustaining inclusive schools (e.g., Billingsley, 2012; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013), and the greater the distribution across individuals and the more activities each performed in supporting inclusion, the greater the continuation of inclusion across time (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

At the same time, evidence shows that principals may be wary of inclusive programs (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007; Praisner, 2003; Salisbury, 2006) and may not view educating students with disabilities as their responsibility (Lashley, 2007). Other barriers to principals’ readiness include lack of preparation about and experience with students with disabilities, uncertainty about the goals of inclusion and how to lead an inclusive school, viewing inclusion as others’ responsibility, and concerns about time and resources (Billingsley, 2012).



Need for Principal Preparation for Inclusive and Effective Schools

The emphasis on principals' work in inclusive reform is understandable given that principals are in a key position to influence schools in ways that make a difference to students with disabilities. For example, principals help set a vision for shared goals, are responsible for creating collaborative structures in schools, help set priorities for teacher learning and instruction, and support staff in analyzing student progress. However, principals often have had little course work related to leadership for inclusive schools (Pazey et al., 2012) or experiences related to addressing the needs of students with disabilities (Burdette, 2010). In one study, only 53% of principals were required to take courses related to special education (Angelle & Bilton, 2009), and only eight states required pre-service principals to receive training in special education (Lynch, 2012). For those who do enroll in leadership courses, the focus is often on law and compliance requirements (e.g., Osterman & Hafner, 2009) rather than leading strong instructional programs for students with disabilities. More recently, a review by Pazey and Cole (2013) concluded that special education has long been a neglected area in leadership preparation and is often "absent in conversations relevant to the creation of administrator preparation programs that embrace a social justice model of leadership" (p. 243). The challenge extends beyond initial preparation programs, as an expert panel noted, citing "lack of ongoing professional development (pre- and in-service), including internship, mentoring, networking opportunities, leadership academies, and other strategies to improve a principal's ability to serve diverse populations" (Burdette, 2010, p. 4). As Frick, Faircloth, and Little (2013) noted, the lack of pre-service preparation and PD likely has a detrimental effect on principals' knowledge and skills in leading programs for students with disabilities.

Preparing principals to lead inclusive and effective schools that improve outcomes for students with disabilities is complex work and requires a substantial knowledge base and an understanding of diverse learners and the systems that support their learning and long-term



success. As Crockett (2002) considered, principal preparation should include a range of elements that address

- (1) moral leadership, involving the ethical analysis of disability-related issues;
- (2) instructional leadership, addressing student centered learning beyond compliance;
- (3) organizational leadership, supporting effective program development, management, and evaluation related to learners with exceptionalities and their teachers; and
- (4) collaborative leadership, promoting partnerships for instruction; conflict resolution and integrated service delivery. (p. 165)

Professional Standards for Educational Leadership

Along with the lack of principal preparation, few policy guidelines exist about how principals should lead inclusive schools that benefit students with disabilities. Today, the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL; National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA, 2015]) and a separate guidance document, *PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities* (developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], CEEDAR, and key stakeholders, 2017) provide an initial foundation for principals as they exercise leadership on behalf of students with disabilities.

To provide an overview of these two documents, the 10 PSEL 2015 standards (see Appendix B) were approved by the NPBEA (2015) and were “recast with a stronger, clearer emphasis on students and student learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership to help ensure that *each* child is well-educated and prepared for the 21st century” (p. 2, emphasis ours). The accompanying guidance document makes explicit connections between each PSEL standard and interprets how that standard is relevant to leading for the success of students with disabilities. Appendix B provides a crosswalk between the PSEL 2015 standards, specific practices for principal leadership for the success of students with disabilities, and the location of supporting content



included in this IC. The second part of the PSEL 2015 guidance document identifies overall key leadership competencies for principals (CCSSO & CEEDAR, 2017, p. 19) and provides discussion about how SEAs can use the guidance document to (a) set goals and expectations for principal practice for serving students with disabilities; (b) improve principal licensure requiring pre-service and practicing principals to have the knowledge and skills to facilitate and support students with disabilities in their schools; (c) improve leadership preparation expectations through program approval processes, focusing on inclusive schools to address the learning needs of students with disabilities; (d) promote meaningful PD and evaluation to develop skills for addressing the needs of students with disabilities; and (e) provide targeted supports to districts and schools around effective, inclusive school leadership.

Ethics and Equity

PSEL 2015 Standard 3 states that leaders should “strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 11). This standard addresses the need for fair treatment for all students, an understanding of each student’s culture and context, the need to address student misconduct in an unbiased manner, and the importance of confronting and altering “institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 11) associated with disability, race, culture, language, gender, and sexual orientation.

Standard 3 addresses a critically important need because the education of students with disabilities “has been plagued by low expectations” (Hehir, 2005, p. 112), which may lead to exclusion from general education classrooms, reduced academic expectations because content standards are viewed to be too advanced, and fewer post-secondary choices (Jorgensen, 2005). As DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013) stated, the long-standing marginalization of students with disabilities, with “inequality, segregation, misidentification, and poor educational achievement of



students,” (p. 3) persists today, particularly in high-poverty schools. Both low expectations and exclusion from general education settings likely contribute to poorer achievement outcomes and post-school success for these students.

To create opportunities for students with disabilities to learn in inclusive settings, principals must work to confront barriers, such as resistance to inclusion, and facilitate developing a collective sense of responsibility for students with disabilities; set high expectations for their achievement; and lead in ways that optimize instruction to improve outcomes. Standard 3 is also relevant to ethical challenges in special education such as preventing the over-identification and misplacement of English learners (EL) and students of color in special education (Pazey et al., 2012). DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013) reported that African-American students were 2.75 times more likely to be identified with an intellectual disability and 2.28 more times to be classified with an emotional/behavioral disability and more likely to be overrepresented in disciplinary actions and drop-out of school. As these authors stated, “equitable and inclusive education for all students becomes a core element of social justice leadership because the pervasive system of segregation has established such unequal outcomes for marginalized groups” (p. 3).

Overview and Development of the Innovation Configuration

In this review, we focus on principal leadership for students with disabilities and situate the findings on its effectiveness in the broader educational leadership literature. This IC configuration (see Appendix A) identifies the critical knowledge and skills—(a) instructional leadership, (b) leadership for inclusive schools, and (c) the support of parent-family engagement in their children’s learning—that are needed to strengthen principal leadership for educating students with disabilities in effective inclusive schools. In the final section, we have emphasized



the importance of district and state leadership to support the work of school leaders. This review follows the IC and synthesizes the research related to each dimension.

We based this paper on key research syntheses about the impact of leadership on student outcomes (e.g., Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004) and effective leadership for inclusive schools (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich, 2011; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013; Dentith, Frattura, & Kaylor, 2013; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Guzman, 1997; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Lieber et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014; Pierson & Howell, 2013; Ryndak, Reardon, Benner, & Ward, 2007; Shogren et al., 2015; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Libert, 2006).

Throughout each section of this paper, we have incorporated additional literature relevant to special education leadership (e.g., Bays & Crockett, 2007; Boscardin, Weir, & Kusek, 2010; Cook & Smith, 2012; Crockett, 2002, 2011; Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012; Deshler & Cornett, 2012; McLaughlin, 2009). The literature evidence that supports the IC (see Appendix C) is either low or emerging for most of the dimensions because the majority of available evidence does not specifically address the impact of leadership dimensions on the achievement of students with disabilities.

Improving Instructional Leadership for Students With Disabilities

Today, the emphasis on leadership is on activities that promote students' learning by creating a learning culture and a strong instructional program (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Although principals have multifaceted roles in leading and managing schools, we have primarily focused on their role as instructional leaders and the knowledge and skills they need to support the



learning of all students in inclusive settings. As instructional leaders, principals are expected to be goal oriented and engaged in strategic action to “align the school’s academic mission with strategy and action” (Hallinger, 2009, p. 5). Although leading for learning has received a great deal of emphasis in the leadership literature, instructional leadership is not always a priority for principals (Elmore, 2004; Hallinger, 2009). Furthermore, limited research exists regarding how principals engage in instructional leadership in ways that benefit students with disabilities.

To provide leadership for effective inclusive schools, principals must understand the needs of students with disabilities and recognize that these needs “vary greatly even within the same disability population and at different stages of their development” (Hehir, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, instructional leadership for students with disabilities requires that the unique needs of these students be understood and addressed, and the students must have opportunities to achieve within the general education curriculum. Furthermore, given the diverse range of needs of students with disabilities, principals must engage in distributed (e.g., Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2007; Spillane, 2006) and collaborative (Hallinger & Heck, 2010) forms of leadership to ensure that the necessary expertise is available to meet the needs of the full range of students with disabilities.

In this section, we reviewed evidence on the work of principals who shared leadership to improve student learning through six core leadership dimensions: (a) supports high expectations for students with disabilities; (b) develops positive, orderly, and safe learning environments; (c) promotes effective instructional practices; (d) supports a system for progress monitoring; (e) organizes working conditions for instructional effectiveness and retention; (f) creates a collaborative culture for teachers’ work; and (g) provides opportunities for professional learning and teacher feedback. We selected these seven leadership dimensions from key research



syntheses because they are critical for improving instruction and outcomes for students with disabilities. Although these dimensions are likely familiar to school leaders, we have emphasized each dimension relevant to supporting the learning of students with disabilities.

Supports High Expectations for Students With Disabilities

Effective principals focus their curricular efforts on establishing high expectations for all students in their schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), and they encourage teachers to help students with disabilities meet content standards. The research literature references a similar concept, academic press, which is defined as “the extent to which school members, including teachers and students, experience a normative emphasis on academic success and conformity to specific standards of achievement” (Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie, 1999, p. 2). Lee and colleagues (1999) posited that students will be more successful when the goals and standards for achievement are high and clear to everyone and when accountability for results exists. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) noted that in more than 20 published empirical studies, most reported “positive, and at least moderate relationships between academic press and student achievement” (p. 674), especially in reading and mathematics but in other subjects as well. Leader behaviors associated with academic press include not only high goals for academic performance, but also protecting teachers from interruptions, monitoring student performance toward academic goals, facilitating PD, and providing feedback on teaching and learning (Lee et al., 1999; Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). Robinson and colleagues (2008) pointed out that in high-achieving schools, “academic goal focus is both a property of leadership” (p. 659) as principals set student achievement as the primary school goal and “a quality of school organization” (p. 659), suggesting that teachers share academic press through the expectations they set for students (e.g., challenging assignments, homework) and effectively using instructional time (Lee et al., 1999;



Leithwood et al., 2010). Moreover, Lee and colleagues (1999) showed that students achieve more when they experience strong academic press in school as well as strong social support (e.g., subjects related to students' personal interests, teachers listen to and know students, students receive help with homework).

Research also suggests that an important quality of inclusive schools is ensuring high expectations for all students, including those with disabilities (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2004; Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Furney, Hasazi, Clark-Keefe, & Hartnett, 2003; Waldron et al., 2011). For example, Dyson and colleagues (2004) conducted case studies in 12 high-performing inclusive schools in England to identify the distinctive factors that supported the success of these schools. One factor that emerged was academic press, or “strong achievement orientation,” (p. 72) because staff had high expectations for all students in these settings, including those with disabilities, and enacted these expectations by providing a range of strategies to improve achievement. Staff directed strategies toward improving the quality of teaching and providing supports to remedy “perceived weaknesses in pupils’ skills and capacities” (p. 77). A case study of an effective inclusive United States school resulted in similar findings (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014) as the principal took on a leadership role in ensuring high achievement expectations for all students and worked with teachers to provide the necessary resources and improve teacher practice to ensure compliance.

As school leaders work to establish high achievement standards for all students, they may find that improving achievement expectations for students with disabilities (and other students) requires challenging the status quo. Educators may not believe that students with disabilities should be held to the same academic standards as other students, even though some students with disabilities clearly achieve these high standards (Olson, 2004; Thurlow et al., 2012). To avoid the



pernicious problems associated with low expectations, principals and other leaders (e.g., special education teachers, district leaders) must engage teachers in conversations about expectations for students with disabilities and help leaders acquire the knowledge and skills to work toward helping students reach grade-level standards. These standards (i.e., CCSS in most states) apply to all students, and the vast majority of students with disabilities take the same state assessments required for all students. A very small percentage of students from low-incidence populations (e.g., those with significant cognitive disabilities) may have alternative achievement standards outlined in their individualized education programs (IEPs); however, these students are still assessed on the same grade-level standards but at different levels of breadth, depth, and complexity (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2013).

Develops Positive, Orderly, and Safe Learning Environments

Principals need to work with school staff to agree on and support student conduct standards with the goal of creating safe, orderly, and productive learning environments (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008). Supporting positive student behavior helps to eliminate disruptions that can have a negative effect on student learning (Hattie, 2009). In a discussion of the effects of disciplinary climate on student learning, Leithwood and colleagues (2010) pointed out that researchers using large-scale data sets and sophisticated research methods have established the importance of a positive disciplinary climate to student outcomes. Referring to one of their own studies, they reported that disciplinary climate had a significant positive effect on student achievement, similar to the magnitude of academic press. Variables included in this study addressed items such as “students do not start working for a long time after my lesson begins” (p. 685), and “students in my class rarely disrupt the learning of other students” (p. 685). In a research synthesis, Hattie (2009) also emphasized that decreasing disruptive behavior had a



moderate effect size on student learning and that “targeting classroom disruptions via a behavioral approach is the most efficacious” (p. 104).

Varied types of evidence-based, school-wide approaches—but not the use of reactive responses to discipline—should be considered to prevent problem behavior (Lane, Cook, & Tankersley, 2013; Sugai, O’Keeffe, Horner, & Lewis, 2012). School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS), a data-driven, evidence-based approach, is designed to teach and encourage desirable behavior from all students. This approach is “based on a prevention perspective in which desired social behavior expectations and routines are taught directly and formally, actively supervised, and positively reinforced” (Sugai et al., 2012, p. 304). Research evidence suggests that successful implementation of SWPBS has been experimentally linked to a range of benefits, including improved achievement and reductions in discipline referrals and suspensions (Horner et al., 2009). In addition, principals using SWPBS received significantly higher ratings in behavior management effectiveness than principals in non-SWPBS schools. Teachers in SWPBS schools also had higher job satisfaction than their peers in non-SWPBS schools (Richter, Lewis, & Hagar, 2012). Finally, it is important to note that SWPBS can substantially reduce the time spent addressing discipline problems (e.g., reducing office discipline referrals; Sugai et al., 2012), thus providing principals with additional time to address other pressing school improvement issues.

Although the aim of SWPBS is to prevent problematic behavior, the approach is also used to identify areas in which problems are likely to occur (e.g., fighting on the bus, high noise levels during lunch) and to establish priorities for group intervention in schools and classrooms. Interventions are designed on a continuum so that more intensive supports are provided when students do not respond to school-wide and classroom efforts to improve behavior. Some



students with disabilities, as well as other students, will need specialized, individualized systems of support.

Promotes Effective Instructional Practices

Principals in high-performing schools provide leadership in overseeing and coordinating instruction. They work to coordinate curriculum across grades and progressions of teaching objectives across levels (Robinson et al., 2008). School leaders also work to protect teachers' instructional time (Elmore, 2004; Robinson et al., 2008) and set clear performance standards for high-quality instruction. Promoting effective instruction means ensuring that teachers learn and effectively use the instructional practices that research shows are most powerful in promoting student learning (Deshler & Cornett, 2012). To address the needs of students with disabilities, principals must be aware of and promote the use of EBPs shown to be effective in improving student learning and ensure that these instructional practices are implemented with fidelity (Cook & Smith, 2012; see Appendix C). As Robinson and colleagues (2008) emphasized, the “source of our leadership indicators should be our knowledge of how teachers make a difference to students” (p. 699).

As research on child development indicates, children mature at varying rates and respond differently to instruction based on biology, environment, and social learning history (Ervin, Schaughency, Goodman, McGlinchey, & Matthews, 2006). At the same time, student needs vary considerably (e.g., background knowledge, current skill levels, interests, learning rate, nature of disability), and not all students respond to high-quality instruction. In response, approaches such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2008) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are promoted in schools with the idea that instruction must be adjusted to help students who are not making adequate progress in standards-based curriculum. In particular, tiered school-wide



instructional models, such as the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS; e.g., Response to Intervention or Instruction [RtI]), are gaining attention because they demonstrate success in improving student outcomes (Algozzine et al., 2012).

Principals also must understand effective instructional practices that teachers use to provide intensive and focused instruction for students with disabilities. As described above, this instruction is often provided using MTSS systems to identify when instruction is making a difference in student learning. In addition, researchers have also identified the most effective instructional practices, referred to as high-leverage practices (HLPs), that help students improve across varied subject areas (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Windschitl, Thompson, Braaten, & Stroupe, 2012). Recently, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) approved a set of HLPs for K-12 special education teachers (see McLeskey et al., 2017) for more detailed information regarding these 22 HLPs). These HLPs provide information to principals and teachers so they recognize and develop the skills needed to provide high-quality instruction to students with disabilities.

Multi-tiered systems are designed to improve the performance of all students in a school and include components such as “universal screening, intervention, progress monitoring, use of data to make decisions and at least three increasingly intense tiers of support” (Deshler & Cornett, 2012, p. 240). Although a detailed description of MTSS is beyond the scope of this paper, such systems show promise in improving student achievement (Algozzine et al., 2012; Batsche, 2014; Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). Conceptually, MTSS provides flexibility in the level of instruction across varied dimensions (e.g., focus of instruction, size of group, frequency of progress monitoring), allowing instruction to be tailored to the needs of students (Batsche, 2014). For example, some students who struggle in Tier 1 need



small-group-focused intervention support at Tier 2 to improve their achievement. Other students whose content knowledge is substantially below grade level often need highly intensive interventions in small groups (e.g., one to three students) at the Tier 3 level to address significant learning problems; these students often require greater fiscal resources and specialized expertise to ensure specially designed and individually appropriate instruction (Ervin et al., 2006; Hoover, Eppolito, Klingner, & Baca, 2012; What Works Clearinghouse [WWC], 2009).

Supports a System for Progress Monitoring

Although statewide accountability measures are currently used to evaluate student outcomes and determine the effectiveness of schools, these external measures provide summative or outcome data related to student performance that is often not useful for making changes in student placements, instructional practices, and other important educational decisions. In effective schools, principals ensure that systems are in place for monitoring student progress and that these data are meaningful to teachers and useful for improving instruction (Robinson et al., 2008). Monitoring systems are used to link student performance data to changes in instruction needed to increase learning.

One approach to internal accountability used in schools is the ongoing monitoring of progress that is done as part of MTSS. In MTSS, principals work with teachers and other school staff to establish a common language about progress monitoring and develop the capacity to collect, analyze, and use progress-monitoring data to inform instructional decisions. MTSS also requires that teachers be knowledgeable and skillful in using data to identify the extent to which instruction or intervention was effective and modify instructional plans to improve performance (Batsche, 2014). In case studies of high-performing inclusive schools, clear systems for tracking student progress were in place, and teachers used these data to determine how students



responded to instruction and what changes in instructional practices were needed to improve student outcomes (Dyson et al., 2004; Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Waldron et al., 2011). For example, in case studies of three effective inclusive schools, Hehir and Katzman (2012) stated that “ongoing assessment is part of the school culture. They [teachers and administrators] do not wait for state testing to act” (pp. 94-95). Teachers in these settings were characterized as data wise, and they spent much time “analyzing and acting on student data concerning academic progress” (p. 94). Across the schools, the data were used to make a range of major instructional decisions on topics such as changes in the approach used for instruction in core content areas (e.g., literacy, mathematics) and determining which students were not making adequate progress and needed more intensive instruction.

In a case study of a highly effective inclusive elementary school, Waldron and colleagues (2011) described how data systems were designed to be meaningful and relevant to teachers, were related to the content taught, and were useful in planning instruction. The results of data monitoring in this school were used to drive decision making, which informed decisions about the allocation of resources (e.g., distribution of technology, use of paraeducators and co-teachers within the school) and areas for PD. The principal in this setting pointedly noted why she needed these data when she said, “How can I have conversations with teachers about their students, how they’re progressing, how well they’re teaching without individual data about students?” (Waldron et al., 2011, pp. 57-58). The teachers and principal agreed that “having a system for monitoring student progress was indispensable,” (Waldron et al., 2011, p. 57) and “school improvement was simply impossible without such a data system” (Waldron et al., 2011, p. 57).

Organizes Working Conditions for Instructional Effectiveness and Retention

Recruiting and hiring strong and effective teachers is a critical part of supporting student



learning because teachers are the “single largest resource for maximizing student achievement” (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 20), and hiring teachers who are committed to and skilled in teaching students with disabilities helps with the collective effort to increase learning opportunities for these students. Retaining effective teachers is also critically important, especially in special education, where ongoing shortages of teachers exist (Billingsley, 2004).

Although hiring the best teachers possible is important, well-prepared teachers are not sufficient for student learning because working conditions mediate teachers’ opportunities to teach, their effectiveness, and their retention (Bettini, Crockett, Brownell, & Merrill, 2016; Billingsley, Crockett, & Kamman, 2014; Hirsch, Emerick, Church, & Fuller, 2007; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Good working conditions may be conceptualized as attributes that make “effective teaching possible” (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 29). In a synthesis of the research literature, Bettini and colleagues (2016) found some evidence that specific working conditions influence teachers’ instructional quality and student achievement, including (a) a school culture supporting high expectations and shared responsibility for student achievement, (b) administrative and collegial support that provides opportunities to collaborate with skilled colleagues to improve instruction, (c) useful and appropriate instructional materials, (d) appropriate instructional groupings, (e) adequate time for instruction, and (f) planning time to support improved practice.

Problematic working conditions pose difficult challenges in special educators’ daily work, particularly role problems such as heavy caseloads and problematic teaching schedules, both of which have been linked to reduced special education teacher effectiveness and turnover (e.g., Bettini et al., 2016; Billingsley, 2004). Both general and special education teachers have expressed concerns about workloads, heavy caseloads, lack of time to teach, and inadequate



opportunities to collaborate with their peers (Billingsley, 2004; Loeb, Elfers, Knapp, Plecki, & Boatright, 2004). Instructional time is clearly a priority for student achievement and is associated with improved student outcomes across a number of subjects and grade levels (Deshler & Cornett, 2012; Harn, Linan-Thompson, & Roberts, 2008; Hattie, 2009). In an observational study, Vannest and Hagan-Burke (2010) illustrated some of the problems with special educators' highly fragmented roles, caused in part by paperwork, meetings, and compliance activities, reducing teachers opportunities for instructional activities. Some special education teachers spent so little time teaching that Vannest and Hagan-Burke asked, "Is a special education teacher really a teacher" (p. 126)?

Another challenge for special education teachers is role conflict and the lack of role clarity as these teachers try to navigate conflicting and ambiguous responsibilities. Ongoing role problems prevent teachers from directing their time in valued ways and may contribute to their intentions to leave (Billingsley, 2004). Principals must create reasonable expectations for instructional practice and reduce non-instructional responsibilities to ensure that special educators have adequate time to teach (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010).

New teachers are particularly vulnerable to problematic working conditions and lack of support (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009), and evidence suggests that teachers who perceive that their administrators as supportive are more likely to remain in the school (Billingsley & Bettini, 2017). Although induction support through mentor and new teacher meetings are helpful to new teachers, principals support new teachers' work by showing support for inclusion, helping to create collaborative cultures, ensuring adequate instructional resources, and communicating with teachers on a regular basis (Billingsley et al., 2009; Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2010; Gehrke & Murri, 2006). If principals do not



understand special educators' needs for varied types of support, they may “unintentionally thwart teacher efforts to provide quality support services for students with disabilities” (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, p. 11) and increase the likelihood that teachers will leave (Billingsley et al., 2004).

Creates a Collaborative Culture for Teachers' Work

A professional community of teachers working in an environment of trust helps build teacher capacity because the teachers learn together, address problems of practice, and share resources to enhance student learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Pugach, Blanton, Correa, McLeskey, & Langley, 2009). School leaders facilitate these relationships while working with general and special educators to establish clear expectations for collaboration and encouraging teacher leadership and experimentation within these teams (Brownell, Billingsley, McLeskey, & Sindelar, 2012; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011). In some schools with professional learning communities (PLCs), special education teachers learn, plan, and teach together on grade-level teams with general educators, EL teachers, reading specialists, and speech therapists, (Fisher et al., 2000; Pugach et al., 2009).

Collaborative teams need to engage in ongoing progress monitoring so they can determine the extent to which students with disabilities are moving toward short-term curriculum goals and long-term achievement standards, meaning that leaders must create the structures and schedules to ensure that staff members have the time, schedules, and preparation to plan for the needs of students with disabilities and engage in collaborative instruction such as co-teaching (Brownell et al., 2012; Burstein et al., 2004; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al., 2014; Pierson & Howell, 2013). For example, Pierson and Howell (2013) described how principals helped with creating schedules to allow general and special



education teachers to co-teach and plan weekly to jointly modify subject-specific pacing guides, curriculum, and common assessments to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Provides Opportunities for Professional Learning and Teacher Feedback

Principals in high-performing schools actively participate in efforts to promote teacher learning. The leadership dimension most closely linked to student achievement is leader involvement in teacher learning (Robinson et al., 2008). “Instructional improvement requires continuous learning” (Elmore, 2004, p. 67), principals must “create the conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good,” (Elmore, 2004, p. 67) and they must “model the learning they expect of others” (Elmore, 2004, p. 67). When school leaders actively participate in teacher learning and are seen as knowledgeable about instruction and as a source of advice, student outcomes are higher, even after controlling for student background (Robinson et al., 2008).

School leaders need to develop an understanding of the nature of professional learning that has been shown to increase teachers’ knowledge and skills, including the use of instructional coaching (Deshler & Cornett, 2012). Today, embedded forms of professional learning are receiving increased attention as school leaders help set the stage for PD about problems of practice through the analysis of student performance data, group lesson study, mentoring, coaching, teacher study groups, and peer coaching about effective instructional practices (Brownell et al., 2012; Deshler & Cornett, 2012; Desimone, 2009; Elmore, 2004; Neumerski, 2013). These embedded forms of professional learning involve collective efforts to improve instruction with critique and professional learning as part of the school culture (Elmore, 2004).

School leaders must have an understanding of the characteristics of professional learning that have been shown to improve teachers’ knowledge and skills as they work to improve



teachers' capacity to provide high-quality instruction in inclusive settings. Desimone (2009) identified five key factors that are important for increasing teachers' knowledge and skills: (a) a content focus, which concerns knowledge about the subject being taught and how students learn the content; (b) active learning, which involves observing experts teach, interactive feedback, reviewing student work, and leading discussions; (c) coherence, or the extent to which learning material is consistent with teachers' knowledge and beliefs; (d) duration that is sufficient over both the span of time and the hours devoted to learning; and (e) collective participation, which involves teachers from school learning teams as they interact with one another about what they learn and refine their practices.

Research syntheses about special education teachers suggest that they learn effective practices when (a) they understand the conceptual foundations of an instructional strategy; (b) the PD content is aligned with the demands of instruction; (c) they have active opportunities to learn with observations and feedback from coaches and mentors; (d) they receive opportunities to discuss the instructional strategy and evaluate its effectiveness on what students learn; and (e) the context, including the provision of necessary materials and administrative support, is supportive (Brownell et al., 2012; Klingner, 2004; Pugach et al., 2009). Moreover, Brownell and colleagues (2012), in a review of recent research, reported that general and special education teachers will implement strategies from PD when they have

(a) a fair amount of knowledge for teaching content and/or knowledge for providing direct, explicit instruction to students with disabilities is strong; (b) beliefs about instruction that align with strategies they are learning; (c) motivation to learn new strategies; and (d) ability to analyze the quality of their instruction and its impact on groups of students as well as individual students. (p. 268)



Brownell and colleagues emphasized that when these individual qualities are not present, teachers will need extra support in the learning process.

High-quality instructional practices must be at the core of formative teacher evaluation systems, and those who observe and provide feedback to teachers (e.g., principals, central office personnel, mentors, peer evaluators) should encourage and reinforce the use of effective practices (Deshler & Cornett, 2012; Johnson et al., 2012). As Robinson and colleagues (2008) reported, greater leader involvement in classroom observation and feedback was more likely to occur in high-performing schools than low-performing schools, and teachers were more likely to describe these evaluations as useful. Unfortunately, there is little to guide principals in evaluating special educators (Holdheide, Goe, Croft, & Reschly, 2010), and packaged systems that become the basis for district teacher evaluation (e.g., Danielson, 2007; Pianta & Hamre, 2009) may not be appropriate for teachers of students with disabilities (Brownell et al., 2012; Jones & Gilmour, in press).

Providing helpful formative evaluations of special education teachers may be challenging if principals know little about special educators' work and the nature of the instruction they provide (Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, 2006; Holdheide et al., 2010; Steinbrecher, Mahal, & Serna, 2013). In some situations, a distributed approach to evaluation (e.g., special education coaches, central office personnel) may be necessary to augment the work of principals in helping special educators improve their practices. For example, principals and local directors of special education may observe special education teachers independently and then collaboratively develop a final report (Holdheide et al., 2010).

Principal Leadership for Inclusive Schools

Establishing an inclusive vision is critical in setting the direction for schools, providing a



moral purpose, and serving as a catalyst for motivating teachers who support the vision and value this work (Fullan, 2007; Ingram, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2008). An important component of setting direction related to inclusive schools is “crafting and revising the school’s direction, so that ownership of the direction becomes widespread, deeply held and relatively resistant to the vagaries of future leadership succession” (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 31). Descriptions of inclusive schools in the literature provide models for thinking about what inclusion means. Hitt and Tucker (2016) indicated that in inclusive schools, members of the community view diversity as a benefit, and these learning environments allow each student to be “known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 13). Shogren and colleagues (2015) described that in exemplary inclusive schools, leaders and teachers created an environment in which students with disabilities were welcomed and valued, and they were included in the same activities as their peers without disabilities. In inclusive learning environments, everyone in the school encourages friendships and a sense of belonging (Billingsley, 2012; Burstein et al., 2004). Teachers who welcome and value students with disabilities set the stage for positive teacher-student relationships to support student learning (Hattie, 2009) and improve outcomes for students with disabilities (Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton, 2009).

Principals should strive to hire faculty who understand and can support an inclusive vision, have high expectations for students with disabilities, and view collaborative work as important to ensuring student success. At the same time, principals will likely need to work with current school staff to build commitment to an inclusive vision, establish a collaborative culture, and provide PD opportunities to use effective instructional strategies. In this section, we address critical components of principal leadership related to inclusive schools, including (a) building a



shared vision and commitment, (b) developing a professional community that shares responsibility for the learning of all students, (c) redesigning the school, and (d) sharing responsibility for inclusive education.

Builds a Shared Vision for Inclusive Schools

To support the development of effective inclusive schools, principals engage others in understanding the why and how of improvement and change so that everyone understands the importance of inclusion for students with disabilities. Setting the direction for inclusion often means working to foster a school-wide commitment to including students with disabilities and providing opportunities for them to achieve. Principals who are effective at developing and sustaining inclusive schools accomplish this commitment in a collaborative culture of open communication, respect, and trust as they facilitate communities in which everyone in the school shares a sense of collective responsibility for improving the learning of all students (Billingsley, 2012; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al., 2014).

A common theme across all studies that addressed inclusive schools was the need to place an emphasis on students with disabilities and inclusion as part of a shared vision for these schools. Several investigations emphasized the important role the principal plays in recognizing the need for a shared vision that addresses students with disabilities and inclusion and working to promote inclusion as a core value in the school (Burstein et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2000; Guzman, 1997; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes 1995; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Lieber et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury, 2006; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011). For example, in a case study investigation of six inclusive schools, Guzman (1997) found that principals across the schools worked with staff to develop a shared vision for the school that “included a belief in the right of



all students to learn, a belief that inclusive classrooms are beneficial for all students, and a commitment to ensuring optimal academic success for all students” (p. 446).

Builds a School-Wide Commitment to Inclusive Schools

Research on inclusive schools highlights the important role principals play in ensuring school-wide commitment to developing effective inclusive schools that respond to the needs of students with disabilities. This aspect of leadership focuses on moving beyond developing a shared vision that is collectively supported within a school to enacting this vision. Evidence related to leadership in inclusive schools indicates that principals work with teachers, students, and parents to build a school-wide commitment that is needed to enact this vision (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Ingram, 1996; Printy, 2008; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011).

The foundation for building a school-wide commitment to inclusion and supporting school staff through the school change process required to enact practices that support inclusive schooling is ensuring that principals have good teacher relationships built on open communication and mutual trust. Research shows that “trust is pivotal in efforts to improve education” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 550). Trust is conceived “as the extent to which people are willing to rely upon others and make themselves vulnerable to others” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 551). Evidence reveals that principals who have good relationships and develop trust with teachers and parents are more likely to successfully develop effective inclusive schools (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). For example, in one effective inclusive school, the principal viewed his most important role as building positive relationships with teachers by “(a) displaying trust in teachers; (b) listening to their ideas, concerns, and problems; and (c) treating staff fairly” (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013, pp. 248-249).



In this setting and other similar settings, relationships characterized by trust and respect were identified as important for keeping teachers involved as leaders and establishing open communication systems that allowed for rich dialogue; time to listen to concerns and ideas; active involvement in supporting inclusive practices (e.g., involvement in PD activities or IEP meetings); and treatment of faculty in a fair manner (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Keyes et al., 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Waldron et al., 2011). In one setting, for example, a principal was optimistic; shared decisions; and remained “flexible, open-minded, and ready to learn from others” (Waldron et al., 2011, p. 54).

Builds a Professional Community That Shares Responsibility for Improving the Learning of All Students

Perhaps the most critical component of leadership linked to building a commitment to inclusion relates to the work principals must do with teachers to ensure that they support inclusion and are motivated to develop successful inclusive programs. This commitment is especially important because substantial evidence reveals that general and special education teachers may resist the development of inclusive programs and may feel that they are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Avrimidis & Norwich, 2002; Idol, 2006; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2013; Waldron, 2007). In particular, teachers have expressed concerns related to the nature and severity of students’ disabilities; the availability of support in the classroom (e.g., personnel such as paraeducators and consultants, curriculum materials); the need for PD to ensure that they have the skills to support student needs; and principal involvement to ensure that supports, such as planning time, are available (Avrimidis & Norwich, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Waldron, 2007). If inclusive schools are to be successfully developed and sustained over time,



principals must address teachers' concerns and ensure that teachers have the support to develop knowledge and skills so that they are prepared to successfully address the needs of all students in their classrooms and are motivated to carry out this work.

In most of the inclusive settings, principals and others provided leadership for ensuring that teachers were well prepared to address the needs of students in their classrooms through the extensive use of planning time and opportunities for PD before beginning the inclusive program (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

Teachers in these settings indicated that these learning experiences were important preparation for new models of teaching (Burstein et al., 2004; Janney et al., 1995). As teachers continued to identify areas in which they needed to refine skills or develop new practices, principals in effective inclusive schools also ensured that after the inclusive program was implemented, high-quality PD was provided by regularly meeting to discuss and problem solve the inclusive program (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999); embedding learning opportunities within the daily work of teachers (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013); and participating in content-area and grade-level teams (Burstein et al., 2004, McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014). In several inclusive schools, principals also worked with teachers to develop a PLC to support teacher learning and problem solving (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014). For example, in one school, the principal was committed to embedding high-quality PD into the daily work of teachers and worked with teachers to develop a PLC to support this work (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). As Waldron and McLeskey (2011) have noted, PLCs in inclusive schools “result in added value by generating multiple solutions to complex problems and by providing opportunities to learn from others as school professionals express and share expertise” (p. 59). Research indicates that PLCs can lead



to greater trust and respect among professional colleagues, improved teacher satisfaction, improved instruction, better outcomes for students, and school change that is sustained over time (Waldron & McLeskey, 2011).

Redesigns Schools for Inclusive Education

Redesigning schools for inclusive education is critically important for the developing inclusive schools because substantial evidence reveals that most schools require extensive redesign or systemic change to successfully develop an effective inclusive school, and the principal is often the most important school leader as change occurs (Guzman, 1997; Idol, 2006; Ingram, 1996; Keyes et al., 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2006; Waldron et al., 2011). Changes often require addressing beliefs of school staff and other stakeholders regarding students with disabilities, changing curriculum and instructional practices, and altering teacher roles (Fullan, 2007; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al., 2014). These changes necessitate substantial redesign of a school that requires changes in the school culture (Ingram, 1996; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002, 2006) and places demands on principals to provide leadership related to school change, which results in supportive working conditions that “allow teachers to make the most of their motivations, commitments and capacities” (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 7).

Research reveals that principals assume many critical leadership roles as they participate in school change to develop a plan and implement an inclusive program. These leadership roles include (a) forming inclusion planning teams; (b) evaluating current school practices related to students with disabilities and other struggling students; (c) developing plans for inclusion; (d) reviewing and revising inclusion plans with school staff and other stakeholders; (e) arranging for PD; (f) implementing substantial changes in school organization, teacher roles, and teaching and learning programs; and (g) evaluating and adjusting inclusive programs as needed (e.g.,



Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Burstein et al., 2004; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2006; Ryndak et al., 2007).

Research further suggests that the deep, systemic changes in schools and school culture that are needed as inclusive schools are developed will not occur or be sustained over time without the active support and leadership of the principal (Ingram, 1996; Sindelar et al., 2006; Waldron et al., 2011). Ingram (1996) stated that without real change in culture, little real or sustained change in behavior will occur. Attempts at inclusion may be short lived or may result in mere surface efforts with students physically included but not challenged to reach their full potential or become active members of the (inclusive) class (p. 423).

Shares Responsibility for Leadership

All of the investigations we reviewed addressing leadership roles in inclusive schools revealed that although principals took an active leadership role in developing and maintaining inclusive programs, they also shared leadership responsibility for some critical tasks (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Devecchi & Nevin, 2010; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011). In a review of this research, Billingsley and McLeskey (2014) found that although principals took an active role in developing and supporting inclusive schools and actively engaged in certain aspects of school improvement, they also shared leadership responsibility with teachers and other professionals. In a more general review of critical drivers for school change, Fixen, Blasé, Naoom, and Duda (2013) provided further support for shared leadership; they found that “‘leadership’ is not a person but different people engaging in different kinds of leadership behavior as needed to establish effective programs and sustain them as circumstances change over time” (p. 23).

Although principals in all of the inclusive schools shared leadership roles, the distribution



of responsibility was strategically approached as principals maintained leadership for certain key areas. Across investigations, principals tended to maintain leadership for several of the following areas: (a) setting a positive tone for inclusion, (b) developing and sharing the school vision, (c) promoting learning communities and high-quality PD for teachers and other staff, (d) communicating with parents, (e) providing recognition and encouragement to teachers, and (f) acquiring needed resources (Billingsley, 2012; Burstein et al., 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Janney et al., 1995; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; 2014; McLeskey, Waldron, Redd, & Jones, 2012; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al.; Ryndak et al., 2007; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011).

Principals in effective inclusive schools seemed to share leadership responsibilities because they realized that attempting to assume leadership for the broad range of activities that must be addressed as inclusive schools are developed and sustained over time was unrealistic (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). The strategic distribution of leadership responsibilities was a pragmatic response by principals to ensure that leadership roles were assigned to individuals or groups with adequate time and expertise to address these activities (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Waldron et al., 2011). Distributing leadership responsibilities in inclusive settings also served to develop teacher leaders to support the inclusive program (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013); increase overall teacher ownership and support for the inclusive initiative; and enhance the likelihood that the inclusive program would be sustained over time (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2007).

Across most of the investigations, the principals were actively involved in the team that planned, implemented, and monitored the inclusive program, although they often shared leadership for this task with teachers (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014). For example, in several



investigations, teachers who were part of inclusion planning teams had primary responsibilities for developing the service delivery model to support the inclusive program and determining changes made in curriculum, instruction, and teacher roles (Billingsley, 2012; Fisher et al., 2000; Kilgore, Griffin, Sindelar, & Webb, 2001; Lieber et al., 2000; Sindelar et al., 2006). Principals distributed a range of other leadership responsibilities to teachers across the investigations, which seemed to be primarily based on the expertise of the professionals involved. For example, teachers were involved in leadership roles as they provided PD for others, developed a school-based system for monitoring student progress, scheduled paraeducators in general education classrooms, and consulted with teachers on specialized issues related to content areas or specific disabilities (Billingsley, 2012; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Janney et al., 1995; McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, et al., 2014; Rice, 2006; Waldron et al., 2011).

Although the research on inclusive reform and leadership has grown over the past decades, much remains to be learned. The research base about school leadership and special education is meager, and studies related to the effects of school leadership on the educational outcomes of students with disabilities are rare. Although some inclusive leadership studies did monitor student outcome measures on mandated tests (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2000; Ryndak et al., 2007), these studies were not designed to consider causal links between leadership and achievement. However, achievement data gathered in these studies does suggest that students tended to maintain or improve their performance on achievement measures.

Parent Leadership and Support

Most reviews have suggested that examining parent influence on student achievement has not been a primary focus of research related to principal leadership. Nonetheless, reviews of research have provided some support related to the engagement of parents in substantive



activities, including leadership roles to support schools, and reveal that this engagement may improve student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2009; Waters et al., 2004).

In the most comprehensive review of parent engagement in schools, Robinson and colleagues (2009) reported a moderate effect for parent involvement in their children's learning. The strongest overall effect was found for interventions designed to support parents or others in the community in working with children outside of the school (e.g., at home). These interventions were most effective when closely coordinated with teacher PD aligned with parent contributions and community funds of knowledge. Robinson and colleagues noted that findings clearly supported that some types of parent involvement, such as volunteering, participating in school activities and functions, and supporting their children's learning, tended to be most closely linked to improved student outcomes.

Research from several sources points to the importance of building strong, trusting relationships and engaging parents in shared decision making regarding important aspects of school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2009). Leithwood and colleagues (2010) summarized this research and concluded that “engaging the school productively with parents, if this has not been a focus, may well produce larger effects on student learning in the short run than marginal improvements to already at least satisfactory levels of instruction” (p. 698); this occurs when parents have a greater sense of involvement in their child's education and higher expectations for their child's success in school (Leithwood et al., 2010). Louis and colleagues (2010) further contended that the value of meaningfully involving parents in their child's education lies in the “potential for increasing family and community members' sense of engagement in children's education”



(p. 108), which could serve to reinforce parenting behaviors that improve student outcomes.

Meaningful involvement in school ranges from engaging parents as active participants on school teams to enforcing rules at home regarding homework (Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010).

Although parent involvement at school and home is important for improving student outcomes in general, this involvement may be even more important as effective inclusive schools are developed. Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) provided three reasons why this may be the case: (a) the long history in special education of organized parent advocacy and federal and state special education laws that mandate parent involvement in their child's education, (b) the emotionally charged and controversial nature of school reform related to inclusion coupled with the high stakes attached to potential outcomes, and (c) the knowledge that is demanded if inclusion is to be successful for students with a wide range of disabilities that provide challenges when these students are educated in general education classrooms. Thus, active leadership for developing and supporting effective inclusive schools should not only come from those inside the school, but also from those such as parents who know their students with disabilities the best (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Engagement of parents in these activities should help principals and other school professionals develop trusting relationships and use the expertise of parents (e.g., knowledge regarding their child's disability) to develop and support inclusive programs.

Available evidence indicates that engaging parents is an important consideration while developing effective inclusive schools (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2007). Two components of leadership for parent engagement were supported by research as important for developing effective inclusive schools and supporting students with disabilities within these



settings (see Appendix A). These factors addressed (a) involving parents in supporting their children's education and (b) engaging parents in shared decision making as inclusive schools are developed and sustained. We have reviewed research related to each of these leadership components.

Engages Parents to Enhance Students' Opportunities for Learning

Parents bring expertise to the development of inclusive schools and allow school leaders to support their students' education. While developing inclusive schools, parents were involved in activities such as ensuring that students were placed in appropriate classrooms (Fisher et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999); supporting teachers in monitoring the progress of students to determine program effectiveness (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2007); providing information and support to teachers based on their parental knowledge of inclusion, instructional adaptations, and specific disabilities (Janney et al., 1995; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999); and advocating to support the school in achieving improved student outcomes (Furney et al., 2003; Ryndak et al., 2007).

In settings where principals and other school professionals have built successful partnerships with parents, relationships are characterized by “collaborative, trusting, empowering relationships between families and educators that support effective service delivery” (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004, p. 169). A central quality of these relationships is the development of trust between principals and other school personnel and parents. Blue-Banning and colleagues (2004) investigated successful partnerships and determined that trust was developed through effective communication, which revealed that school personnel were dependable (i.e., could be relied upon to follow through on promises); providing a safe setting for children (i.e., parents felt that their children could be left in school without fear of emotional or physical harm); and demonstrated discretion (i.e., professionals



could be trusted with private or confidential information about the family). This trusting relationship provides a supportive context for parents to be involved as they work to enhance learning opportunities for their children and participate in shared decision making as inclusive schools are developed and sustained.

Engages Parents in Shared Decision Making as Inclusive Schools Are Developed and Sustained

Many parents engage in advocating for their children before inclusive programs are developed (Burstein et al., 2004; Lieber et al., 2000; Ryndak et al., 2007). For example, Ryndak and colleagues (2007) found that some students with severe disabilities had access to general education classrooms through their parents' advocacy rather than through school-wide change or local policy initiatives. Similarly, Burstein and colleagues (2004) found that prior to school-wide or district initiatives related to inclusion, some changes were already occurring in classrooms based on teacher-parent interest in inclusive models. This grassroots advocacy provides early support for the development of a school-wide vision related to effective inclusive schooling and facilitates the development of inclusive practices in classrooms.

In several settings, principals engaged parents as part of a group that developed and shared a vision for inclusive schooling with stakeholders both inside (e.g., teachers, paraeducators, administrators) and outside (e.g., other parents) of the school (Burstein et al., 2004; Lieber et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2007). In some settings, parents provided the initial impetus for developing this vision (Burstein et al., 2004; Lieber et al., 2000). Engaging parents provided principals in these settings an opportunity to build support for inclusion among parents, develop trusting relationships, and share decision making with parents as inclusive programs were subsequently developed.



Principals often shared leadership for decision making related to inclusive schools with a range of stakeholders, including parents (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014). For example, research by Ryndak and colleagues (2007) related to a district-wide initiative to support the development of inclusive schools found that parents were actively involved on leadership teams at the district and school levels. Leadership teams included district and school administrators, instructional staff, support personnel, and parents. Teams frequently met to identify and address barriers to effective inclusive practices, provide support for the school-wide development of inclusive programs, and engage teachers in PD related to inclusive practices. Similarly, research in other settings reveals that parents played an important leadership role in school-based inclusion planning teams (Furney et al., 2003; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury, 2006; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002) as they shared their expertise related to inclusion and students with disabilities and also advocated for the development of inclusive programs.

Importance of District and State Leadership

Principals are critical to the success of students with disabilities, and forming productive partnerships with parents and special education professionals is an essential component of inclusive leadership (Crockett, 2002; Harry, 2012; McLaughlin, 2009). As principals' responsibilities have expanded to ensure the use of EBPs and evaluate the performance of special education teachers, the importance of district- and state-level leadership has also grown (Boscardin, 2005; Boscardin & Lashley, 2012; Boscardin et al., 2010; Lynch, 2012). Emerging evidence suggests that students' academic achievement improves when district and state policies align with school-wide commitments to high-quality instruction for all learners (Barr, 2012; Deshler & Cornett, 2012; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Stonemeier et al., 2014; Zavadsky, 2009).

Federal and state education policies shape the work of school systems, which in turn



shape the work of principals within the local context of their schools (Kozleski & Huber, 2012). In a well-aligned system, “the delivery of special education is conceptualized as a seamless system of supports and services delivered within the context of an equitable and culturally responsive general education system” (Kozleski & Huber, 2012, p. 167). Changes for any group of students, including those with disabilities, are considered systemic changes rather than changes that occur within separate bureaucratic silos. In schools where students have wide-ranging capabilities, some evidence exists for using flexible MTSS to allocate resources toward promoting positive outcomes in reading, mathematics, and social-emotional competence, especially in elementary schools (Hoover et al., 2012; WWC, 2009). In states and districts where principals have adopted school-wide academic and behavioral systems, the traditional boundaries between general and special education have become blurred as students move across a continuum of increasingly intensive interventions to receive the support they need (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). Collaboration with state and district leaders can (a) strengthen alignment, (b) strengthen decision making, (c) strengthen instruction, and (d) strengthen relationships in helping principals recognize and effectively respond to significant learning differences and secure resources and support for equitable instructional decisions.

Strengthens Alignment

At the state level, leaders establish rules and regulations for approving special education programs in local school districts, serving as resources to legislators, and providing leadership for statewide plans to ensure equal educational opportunities. Evidence suggests that aligning systems for resolving disputes, coordinating services with families, providing PD, and overseeing compliance with state and federal rules influence practices at the district level (Kozleski & Huber, 2012). Locally, all school systems have one or more district leader with expertise in special services and effective practices for students with disabilities, and these local



special education administrators (LSEAs) are well positioned to support principal leadership in a variety of ways.

Strengthens Decision Making

LSEAs can help principals make ethically sound and legally correct educational decisions. Policies govern the administration of special education, and although principals must be knowledgeable, LSEAs are primarily responsible for compliance. To help inform effective shared leadership, an extensive body of literature exists addressing complex moral dilemmas and legal and fiscal facets of special education (Baker, Green, & Ramsey, 2012; Boscardin et al., 2010; Gooden, Eckes, Mead, McNeil, & Torres, 2013; Shapiro & Stepkavich, 2011; Yell, Thomas, & Katsiyannis, 2012).

Strengthens Instruction

LSEAs can support the development of principals as instructional leaders for all learners. Research guides the delivery of special education, and LSEAs have primary responsibility for supporting the appropriate education of students with disabilities (Council of Administrators of Special Education [CASE], 2010); serving as advocates; and fostering achievement in district schools. LSEAs are expected to be knowledgeable about effective instructional practices, PD, and flexible service delivery designed to support the success of students with disabilities, and emerging evidence exists to support these district-wide practices (Brownell et al., 2012; Deshler & Cornet, 2012; Duchnowski, Kutash, & Oliveira, 2004; Honig, 2012; Marsh et al., 2005).

Strengthens Relationships

LSEAs can provide additional support by collaborating with principals to build trust, negotiate conflict, and strengthen relationships with families and agencies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities (Harry, 2012; Lake & Stewart, 2012; Test, Mazzotti, & Mustian, 2012). LSEAs are expected to share their expertise with school leaders and district colleagues so



that information about educating students with disabilities is efficiently transmitted throughout the school system (Crockett, 2011; Goor, 1995; Lashley & Boscardin, 2003; Pazez & Yates, 2012). As a result, their traditional roles as compliance monitors are changing in learning-focused school districts as they increasingly assume the role of consultants in helping principals create effective inclusive learning environments in their schools (Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010).

Conclusion

Principals are charged with leading schools so that all students, including those with disabilities, achieve college- and career-readiness curriculum standards. In inclusive schools, principals work to ensure that all members of the school community welcome and value students with disabilities, and they encourage everyone in the school, as well as parents and those from other agencies, to collaborate and share their expertise so that students with disabilities have opportunities to achieve improved outcomes in school and post-school life. In this paper, we have synthesized research from both the general and special education leadership literature to identify critical research findings about effective practices and their implications for practice (see Appendix C). We have acknowledged the formidable challenges these implications have for principals, especially those who have minimal preparation for the inclusion and instruction of students with disabilities. As we have emphasized, district and SEAs play important roles in supporting principals' work; improving their preparation through pre-service preparation and PD (see Bellamy, Crockett, & Nordengren, 2013); and aligning resources and PD in ways that benefit students with disabilities.



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Appendix A
Innovation Configuration for Principal Leadership for Students With Disabilities

Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>1.0 Instructional Leadership for All Students: All principals have expertise for instructional leadership that is focused on student outcomes and supports students with disabilities in achieving the curriculum standards expected of all students.</p>					
<p>1.1 - Ensures academic press, a normative emphasis on academic success and conformity to specific standards of achievement for all students.</p>					
<p>1.2 - Develops a positive disciplinary climate to ensure an orderly, safe, and supportive learning environment, including clear and consistent social and behavioral expectations.</p>					
<p>1.3 - Ensures high-quality instruction and coordinates a coherent curriculum, including the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) for students with disabilities.</p>					



Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>1.0 Instructional Leadership for All Students: All principals have expertise for instructional leadership that is focused on student outcomes and supports students with disabilities in achieving the curriculum standards expected of all students.</p>					
<p>1.4 - Develops a system for progress monitoring to ensure early and ongoing monitoring of student progress and uses this information for program improvement.</p> <p>1.5 - Organizes working conditions for instructional effectiveness, providing the organizational supports needed to increase teachers' opportunities to teach and foster the success of all students in inclusive environments (e.g., working conditions, caseloads, resources, scheduling, teacher collaboration, co-teaching, schedules, use of space).</p> <p>1.6 - Provides opportunities for professional learning and teacher evaluation that are directly linked to curriculum, teaching, and learning.</p>					



Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>2.0 Strengthening Principal Leadership for Inclusive Schools: All principals are committed to developing inclusive schools that value and support all students, including those with disabilities.</p>					
<p>2.1 - Builds a shared vision for inclusive schools that focuses on high expectations and improved achievement for all students, including those with disabilities; fosters the acceptance of group goals; and communicates the vision to all stakeholders.</p>					
<p>2.2 - Builds a school-wide commitment to inclusive schools, working with teachers, students, and parents to include all students as valued members of the school community.</p>					
<p>2.3 - Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students, providing high-quality professional development (PD) and the necessary work context to ensure that all students have opportunities to achieve in inclusive settings.</p>					



Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>2.0 Strengthening Principal Leadership for Inclusive Schools: All principals are committed to developing inclusive schools that value and support all students, including those with disabilities.</p>					
<p>2.4 - Redesigns schools for inclusive education using systematic change processes.</p>					
<p>2.5 - Shares responsibility for leadership, engaging others in shared decision making.</p>					



Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>3.0 Parent Leadership and Support: All principals have the expertise to engage parents to foster learning for all students, including students with disabilities.</p>					
<p>3.1 - Engages parents to enhance students' opportunities for learning.</p> <p>3.2 - Engages parents in shared decision making as inclusive schools are developed and sustained by developing high-quality partnerships with parents, families, community members, and relevant agencies that are characterized by reciprocal communication, respect, and trust.</p>					



Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
	<p>There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.</p>	<p>Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.</p>	<p>Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.</p>
<p>4.0 District and State Leadership: All districts have one or more district administrator with expertise in special services and research-based practices for children with disabilities.</p>					
<p>4.1 - Strengthens alignment of systems by coordinating services, supporting families, providing PD, and overseeing compliance.</p> <p>4.2 - Strengthens decision making by supporting principals in making ethically sound, legally correct, and educationally useful decisions regarding inclusive schooling.</p> <p>4.3 - Strengthens instruction by supporting the development of principals as leaders of instruction for all learners in inclusive schools.</p> <p>4.4 - Strengthens relationships by collaborating with principals in building trust, negotiating conflict, and strengthening relationships with families and agencies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.</p>					



Appendix B
Crosswalk Aligning PSEL 2015 Standards, Guidance Document, & Principal Leadership Innovation Configuration

PSEL 2015 Standards*	Excerpts From PSEL Guidance Document, <i>Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities</i> **	Innovation Configuration Document, <i>Principal Leadership for Inclusive and Effective Schools for Students With Disabilities</i> ***
1. Mission, vision, and core values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively to develop a mission and vision that supports the success of students with disabilities. • Ensure a mutual commitment to this mission and vision among faculty. • Include parents and other external stakeholders in the vision process. 	<p>Principal leadership and students with disabilities (p. 6)</p> <p>Principal leadership for inclusive schools (p. 25)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds a shared vision for inclusive schools • Builds school-wide commitment • Builds a professional community that shares responsibility <p>Supports high expectations for students with disabilities (p. 12)</p>
2. Ethics & professional norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to ethical and professional norms and uphold the moral imperative to acknowledge inequities and promote equality. • Possess an ethical mindset to identify, interpret, and manage the ethical dilemmas in leadership for students with disabilities and address them by embodying the values of justice and care, equality and equity, and community in service of each student. • Lead with interpersonal and social-emotional competence and develop productive relationships by communicating effectively, cultivating interpersonal awareness, and building trust. 	<p>Ethics and equity (p. 8)</p> <p>Principal leadership for inclusive schools (p. 25)</p>



PSEL 2015 Standards*	Excerpts From PSEL Guidance Document, <i>Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities</i> **	Innovation Configuration Document, <i>Principal Leadership for Inclusive and Effective Schools for Students With Disabilities</i> ***
3. Equity & cultural responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the academic success and well-being of each student, including students with disabilities, through equitable access to effective teachers, culturally responsive learning opportunities and supports, and necessary resources. • Hold asset-based rather than deficit-based perspectives of students and recognize relationships among disability, cultural differences, and social inequities. • Recognize, confront, and educate others about the institutional forces and historical struggles that have impeded equitable educational opportunities for students with disabilities. 	<p>Ethics and equity (p. 8)</p> <p>Supports high expectations for students with disabilities (p. 12)</p> <p>Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students (p. 26)</p>
4. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate high academic expectations for all students, including students with disabilities; promote high-quality intellectually-challenging curricula and instruction; and provide opportunities for students with disabilities to achieve within the general education curriculum using a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). • Work collaboratively with classroom teachers to help them develop their capacity for effective instruction. • Ensure that evidence-based approaches to instruction and assessment are implemented with integrity and are adapted to local needs. • Promote appropriate, clear, and valid monitoring and assessment systems in which teachers receive meaningful information about how students respond to instruction and where information is relevant to instructional improvement. 	<p>Supports high expectations for students with disabilities (p. 12)</p> <p>Promotes effective instructional practices (p. 15)</p> <p>Supports a system for progress monitoring (p. 17)</p> <p>Develops positive, orderly and safe learning environments (p. 14)</p>



PSEL 2015 Standards*	Excerpts From PSEL Guidance Document, <i>Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities</i> **	Innovation Configuration Document, <i>Principal Leadership for Inclusive and Effective Schools for Students With Disabilities</i> ***
5. Communities of student care and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy environment that meets the needs of all students and encourages them to be active, responsible members of their community. • Ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities to learn with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. • Promote inclusive social environments that foster acceptance, care, and sense of value and belonging in adult-student and student-peer relationships. • Support teachers as they create productive and inclusive environments in their classrooms and throughout the school. 	<p>Develops positive, orderly, and safe learning environments (p. 14)</p> <p>Principal leadership for inclusive schools (p. 24)</p> <p>Builds a shared vision for inclusive schools (p. 25)</p> <p>Builds a school-wide commitment to inclusive schools (p. 25)</p> <p>Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students (p. 29)</p>
6. Professional capacity of school personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire and retain highly effective special education and general education teachers with a school-wide vision and a set of core values that support improving achievement and outcomes for students with disabilities. • Provide multiple sources of high-quality, meaningful professional learning and development opportunities and participate alongside staff. • Identify strategies to motivate staff and encourage, recognize, and facilitate leadership opportunities for teachers and staff who effectively educate students with disabilities. 	<p>Organizes working conditions for instructional effectiveness and retention (p. 19)</p> <p>Principal leadership for inclusive schools (p. 24)</p> <p>Provides opportunities for professional learning and teacher feedback (p. 21)</p> <p>Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students (p. 26)</p> <p>Shares responsibility for leadership (p. 29)</p> <p>Redesigns schools for inclusive education (p. 28)</p>



PSEL 2015 Standards*	Excerpts From PSEL Guidance Document, <i>Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities</i> **	Innovation Configuration Document, <i>Principal Leadership for Inclusive and Effective Schools for Students With Disabilities</i> ***
7. Professional community for teachers & staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to set high expectations for and engage in active self-assessment and reflective learning to promote mutual accountability. • Maintain a just and democratic workplace that gives teachers the confidence to exercise responsible discretion and be open to criticism. • Promote collaborative cultures focused on shared responsibility for achieving the mission and vision of the school and for the success of students with disabilities. • Communicate clear expectations for collaboration within and among established teams of teachers without micromanaging and encourage experimentation among teams. • Manage tensions and conflict while developing conditions for productivity, including effective professional development (PD), practice, and support to staff. 	<p>Supports high expectations for students with disabilities (p. 12)</p> <p>Create a collaborative culture for teachers' work (p. 21)</p> <p>Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students (p. 26)</p> <p>Shares responsibility for leadership (p. 29)</p>
8. Meaningful engagement of families & community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnerships with families of students with disabilities and engage them purposefully and productively in the learning and development of their children in and out of school. • Engage families to provide insight about their children's specific disabilities that allows teachers to better understand their needs, make educationally sound instructional decision, and assist in interpreting and assessing student progress. 	<p>Parent leadership and support (p. 31)</p> <p>Engages parents to enhance students' opportunities for learning (p. 33)</p> <p>Engages parents in shared decision making as inclusive schools are developed and sustained (p. 34)</p>



PSEL 2015 Standards*	Excerpts From PSEL Guidance Document, <i>Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities</i> **	Innovation Configuration Document, <i>Principal Leadership for Inclusive and Effective Schools for Students With Disabilities</i> ***
9. Operations & management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage budgets and develop strong relationships with central offices to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources and that students with disabilities have access to appropriate transportation, classrooms, services, accommodations, and extracurricular activities. • Ensure that external resources are aligned with the schools’ goals and support core programs and services for all students. • Assign roles and responsibilities to optimize staff capacity to address each student’s learning needs, especially students with disabilities. Develop and effectively manage school structures, operations, and administrative systems that support students with disabilities. 	<p>Supports a system for progress monitoring (p. 17)</p> <p>Organizes working conditions for instructional effectiveness and retention (p. 19)</p> <p>Redesigns schools for inclusive education (p. 28)</p> <p>Creates a collaborative culture for teachers’ work (p. 21)</p>
10. School improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the “why” and “how” of improvement and change; staff should be motivated and empowered to own improvement initiatives and share responsibility and accountability for their success. • Provide learning opportunities for teachers and staff to equip them to participate in strategic processes of improvement and take part in implementing effective programs and practices for students with disabilities. • Address teacher capacity needs to identify, implement, and evaluate evidence-based interventions and ensure that necessary conditions for teaching and learning exist to prepare students with disabilities for success in college, career, and life. • Ensure that the needs of students are intentionally addressed in the school’s broader improvement plans. 	<p>Principal leadership for inclusive schools (p. 24)</p> <p>Promotes effective instructional practices (p. 16)</p> <p>Supports a system for progress monitoring (p. 17)</p> <p>Builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students (p. 26)</p> <p>Create a collaborative culture for teachers’ work (p. 26)</p> <p>Redesigns schools for inclusive education (p. 28)</p>



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- *National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). *Professional standards for educational leaders* (PSEL 2015). Reston, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2015/ProfessionalStandardsforEducationalLeaders2015forNPBEAFINAL.pdf>
- ** Council of Chief State School Officers & The Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center. (2017). *PSEL 2015 and promoting principal leadership for the success of students with disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2017/PSELforSWDs01252017.pdf>
- *** Billingsley, B., McLeskey, J., & Crockett, J. B. (2017). *Principal leadership: Moving toward inclusive and high-achieving schools for students with disabilities* (revised; Document No. IC-8). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website: <http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/innovation-configurations/>



Appendix C

Sources of Evidence-Based Practice in Special Education

Source	Description
Best Evidence Encyclopedia (BEE), Struggling Readers	BEE, which identifies evidence-based programs in general education, applied its standards for EBPs to programs aimed at struggling readers. (http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/strug/strug_read.htm)
Exceptional Children, 75(3)	This special issue contains five evidence-based reviews that applied Gersten and colleagues' (2005) and Horner and colleagues' (2005) standards for identifying EBPs in special education.
National Autism Center (NAC), National Standards Project	NAC applied systematic standards to determine established (i.e., EBPs); emerging; unestablished; and ineffective/harmful practices for children with autism. (http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/affiliates/reports.php)
National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI)	Although NCRTI does not denote which practices are EBPs, it provides information on quality, design, and effect size for each study reviewed on the basis of which educators can determine which practices meet EBP standards. (http://www.rti4success.org/chart/instructionTools/)
National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)	Practices for secondary transition of students with disabilities are categorized as having strong, moderate, potential, or low levels of evidence support for causal inference based on standards adapted from Gersten and colleagues (2005) and Horner and colleagues (2005). (http://www.nsttac.org/ebp/evidence_based_practices.aspx)
National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders	The Center identified 24 EBPs for students with autism spectrum disorder and included links to briefs that include step-by-step directions for implementation. (http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/evidence-based-practices)
What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), Students with Learning Disabilities	WWC, which identifies EBPs in general education, has begun to review practices specifically for students with learning disabilities. (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/Topic.aspx?tid=19)
WWC, Early Childhood Education for Students with Disabilities	The WWC, which identifies EBPs in general education, has begun to review practices specifically for early childhood education for students with disabilities. (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topic.aspx?tid=22)

Note. The sources listed above (Cook & Smith, 2012) applied systematic standards related to research design, quality of research, quantity of research, and magnitude of effect or provided information along each of these dimensions.

