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Focus Section Book Reviews

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FOCUS BOOK REVIEWS

HOW TO REACH AND TEACH ALL STUDENTS IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

SANDRA F. RIEF AND JULIE A. HEIMBURGE. THE CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH IN EDUCATION, 1996.

Reviewed by Kathy M. Beam, M.Ed.

Educators today face many challenges. They are asked to be inclusive of all students and at the same time to be effective in addressing a diverse range of learning needs in their classrooms. As a result, there has been a proliferation of resource materials offering information and ideas on how to support students in inclusive classroom settings. Experience has proven, however, that ready-to-use strategies, lesson plans, and activities have only limited value if not presented in the more complete context of learning theory and best teaching practices. *How to Reach and Teach All Students in the Inclusive Classroom* meets these criteria by addressing the elements critical to successful inclusive education.

The information presented in this resource is comprehensive, providing a rationale and explanation of theory as well as pertinent strategies and techniques for use in the classroom. The format is organized to facilitate easy reference, with each section designated to a particular topic. Teaching practices based on an understanding of learning styles, multiple intelligences, cooperative learning, developmental learning, alternative assessment, whole language, hands-on instruction, thematic teaching, and collaborative teaching are addressed. In addition, other topics discussed include increasing home/school communication, behavior management and positive discipline, getting students organized for success, fostering students' self-esteem, accommodating students with special learning needs, effective questioning techniques, fostering research skills, and supporting oral language development in the classroom. Reproducible management tools are provided as well as bibliographies and resource lists, noting additional agencies and sources of information.

As a special education consultant, I found the sections specifically relating to students with special needs of particular interest. The authors state their belief that all students must be viewed as unique individuals, having more similarities than differences. In fact, the educational needs of children with learning disabilities, those with ADD/ADHD, those who are limited English proficient, and those who are gifted and talented require many of the same teaching strategies and techniques. They write:

The literature and research on effectively teaching all of the above diverse populations of children keeps leading to the same conclusions: These children all need hands-on, active learning that is stimulating, relevant, developmentally appropriate, and taps their learning strengths. They need to be provided with choices, structure, and clarity of expectations within an accepting and nurturing environment. When we work to increase our teaching skills and repertoire of instructional strategies for today's classroom, we are indeed working to meet the needs of all students. (p. 168)

The importance of strategic teaching is quickly becoming the battle cry for those of us working to support students in inclusive classrooms. It is a theme that is embedded throughout this resource.

Information concerning characteristics of specific learning needs as well as effective strategies and recommendations for the classroom and home are extensive. A list of possible testing and adaptations is also provided to ensure a fair assessment of a student's learning. In addition, a special aspect of this book is that it provides information concerning children who are at risk due to prenatal exposure to drugs and children who are limited in their English proficiency, subjects not readily found in other resources.

An especially noteworthy topic addressed in this book is that of effective questioning techniques for the classroom. As the authors point out, "Many teachers inadvertently use questioning techniques that are highly exclusive of numerous children in the classroom" (p. 235). They further note that research has shown the importance of effective questioning strategies which encourage high response opportunities for students, student accountability, critical divergent thinking, and active participation—with everyone's voice heard and respected. Questioning techniques such as the Socratic seminar, reciprocal teaching, and guided reading are discussed with examples provided. Other questioning strategies designed to increase student response opportunities are also discussed.

The authors of *How to Reach and Teach All Students in the Inclusive Classroom* dedicated this work to the students who inspired and challenged them to continue learning, growing, and developing as teachers. It is evident that this resource is a reflection of their belief in the ability of every child to learn and in the ability of every educator to teach.

Educators in Catholic schools are especially challenged, perhaps more than ever before "to teach as Jesus did." A reflection statement on inclusion issued by the Department of Elementary Schools of the National Catholic Educational Association states that children with special needs are to be welcomed into the Catholic school community. The Department of Elementary Schools writes, "Catholic elementary schools recognize their responsibility to provide a learning environment that fosters growth and considers the individual needs of the child. To the extent possible, Catholic elementary schools will serve children with special needs in general education classes." However, in my work as a Catholic-school special education consultant, I am ever reminded of the importance of providing teachers with the necessary resources and support as their classroom populations become increasingly more diverse.

The authors' closing remarks in *How to Reach and Teach All Students in the Inclusive Classroom* state that teachers cannot be expected to do this alone. Teachers must be provided with ongoing, meaningful professional development in strategic teaching practices, they must be given time to plan and collaborate, and they must be given smaller classes and additional support personnel. Offering teachers a resource of this quality and relevancy is a beginning.

Kathy M. Beam is a special education consultant with the Archdiocese of Louisville.

INCLUSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: BOLD INITIATIVES CHALLENGING CHANGE

DANIEL D. SAGE, ED. NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES, INC., 1997.

Reviewed by Kelly Branaman

Defining inclusion on a philosophical level is not a difficult task. It is characterized simply with one premise in mind, including all. Variations in defining the term unfold as individual schools take on this task of change and mold a program of inclusion into their existing environment, tradition, and climate. Each stakeholder in educational reform has a different and unique

claim on the process. Teachers have vested interest in the skill level, instructional methods, and management changes necessary to implement inclusive practices. Administrators focus on the structural organization of the program, the movement toward school change, and the supports necessary for staff to accomplish reform. Policy makers and board members debate the feasibility and legalities of such practices. Holistically, schools should work toward one comprehensive system that encompasses all members without segregation or barriers. Schools need to work in balance to bring together the growing societal issues raised by inclusion and the existing expectations already placed on schools. Bridging that enormous distance between visioning the value of inclusion and implementing a successful program in schools is a tremendous task. The long-range study and planning that must precede program selection and implementation is critical, and the commitment to the longevity of the change process is crucial.

Individual schools in the Archdiocese of Louisville operate under their own unique missions, visions, and value systems within the broader context of Catholic education. Traditions of excellence run deep in their histories. As a special education consultant for these schools, I have experienced firsthand how each school individually defines and works toward an inclusive program. They function under a variety of models, climates, and support structures to meet students' needs effectively. It is a delicate task for Catholic schools to address learning diversity, as the need often exceeds the means. With greater obstacles blocking the development of inclusion and greater complexity of program design, secondary schools may find fewer supports and model programs to build upon than elementary schools.

Inclusion in Secondary Schools: Bold Initiatives Challenging Change is a collection of longitudinal views and case studies on a variety of secondary schools that have successfully or not so successfully implemented such change. Sensitive to the variety in school make-up, editor Daniel D. Sage provides a sampling of schools representing varied socioeconomic populations in both rural and urban settings. Moreover, he compiles as co-authors a varied representation of stakeholders including teachers, principals, and higher education coordinators and professors. With this approach, readers are given a firsthand comprehensive view of varied experienced insights into the change process toward school inclusion.

Secondary schools considering movement toward inclusion would benefit from examining this book to investigate the varied models and implementations described by contributing authors. As teachers, administrators, and policy makers have equitable yet different investments into the process, the book is written to capture the interests of each level of inclusion.

Sage writes in his introduction that there is a state of necessary knowledge and skill needed to make informed decisions on inclusion. Focusing away from the ideological level and formulating more concrete answers to

the “when and how” begins to define inclusion uniquely at individual schools. Those investigating successful inclusive models before developing site-based programs would benefit from reading this book, especially as a study tool for entire staffs or school boards. Each case study was guided to present itself under a uniform outline provided by the editor and specifically reported on the following components:

- An inclusive experience or situation that has taken place at the secondary level
- The environment in which the event took place
- The nature of existing special education programs before the movement toward inclusion
- Developments that generated an interest in inclusion
- Actions that prepared staff for the change process
- Obstacles that developed
- Operation of the program itself
- Descriptions of instructional materials and methods
- Identifiable results
- Future plans

The book concludes by characterizing some common elements that appear throughout the example case studies. Sage connects the varied samples by what he calls “reasonable regularities” found in designing and implementing inclusion in schools. He notes that inclusion is just one aspect in a larger, broader effort of change. Many schools found that simultaneous with the movement toward inclusion they were forced to reevaluate current missions, structures, and curriculum. Sample schools notably structured themselves to an existing and clearly defined theory, practice, or model of change and school reform. Frequently mentioned in the sampling was the need for secondary schools to break down into smaller units of collaboration and extend time scheduling by removing themselves from traditional structures. This “connectiveness” among staff and the execution of interdisciplinary units were regarded as strong contributors to the success of inclusive programs. Schools also made great strides in accomplishing goals by collaborating with outside agencies.

This collection of information would be helpful for any school working toward inclusive education. In addition to the variety of case studies supporting inclusion, authors provide a comprehensive outline for schools to consider during the change process. It guides a school through the beginning stages of initial inquiry all the way through redefining roles of educators and staff into collaborators and advocates for reform. With this guide and the variety of models described, this book is an excellent tool to investigate more inclusive practices in secondary schools.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY: HOW EDUCATORS CAN TRANSFORM SCHOOLS AND IMPROVE LEARNING

JAMES L. BROWN AND CERYLLE A. MOFFETT. ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, 1999.

Reviewed by Marian C. Glancy

The Hero's Journey provides a metaphorical context in which a dialogue on the purpose and direction of schooling may be conducted so that public education in the United States will more successfully educate children in the next millennium. Educators are charged with the responsibility of improving learning and transforming schools. But unlike many texts on transforming schools which focus responsibility on those in administrative roles, the authors assert that it is through the personal and professional tenacity of educators at *all* levels that substantive change can be effected. This book is an anthology of thoughts of the pivotal players: teachers, principals, district level administrators, and national education consultants on the heroic journey to school transformation.

At the outset, Brown and Moffett outline their rationale for using the heroic journey metaphor:

We believe that applying the conceptual lens of the archetypal heroic journey to the challenges we face in contemporary education can stimulate the personal and professional commitment needed for courageous action on the part of individuals, teams, and school communities. (p. viii)

However, not only do they justify the use of the metaphor, they test its potential effectiveness as an instrument for reflection and change by interviewing educators at all levels and using the themes which emerge. Subsequently, these themes become the essence of the book and are further developed through three key domains. First, six phases of the mythic hero's journey are profiled, from unconscious innocence to self-awareness, insight, and transformation. Second, a delineation of the critical issues confronting educators today is paralleled with each phase. Third, each phase is investigated using the voices and perspectives of practicing educators; the result being, "...we reaffirmed that the deep learning that comes from exploring new landscapes with trusted colleagues is indeed a social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual act" (p. 4). This concept of a shared mission is one that permeates this book to such an extent that it is promulgated as being the most significant way for educators at all levels to achieve personal, professional, and organizational change.

Apart from those domains and themes, the book is further organized into eight chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of change. In chapter one the scene is set by outlining the central ideas of metaphor and mythology which are used throughout the book to illustrate and exemplify what Brown and Moffett believe is required to bring about improved learning and transformation in schools. Subsequent chapters provide an overview of educational and organizational literature; an analysis of previously embraced approaches and models of change theory; critical reflection on the proverbial head-in-the-sand approach to change; the quintessential vision which drives the heroic journey to transformation; the need to understand the interface of knowledge, personal wisdom, and insight in informing policy and practice; and a deeper understanding of what a heroic journey entails in terms of initiating, knowing, and sustaining transformational change.

Metaphors can be useful for elucidating an idea or theme, and in doing so permit us better to understand or perhaps make more concrete what was previously abstract or complex. But such metaphors can also obscure our vision. In this book, the authors come very close to utilizing metaphor and mythology to such a degree that they cloud the reader's understanding, instead of focusing it more sharply. The greatest danger is that metaphors begin to define change instead of providing a mechanism by which to discuss and reflect on change. The metaphorical and analogous language did, at times, distract this reviewer from the substantive content of the book. Initially, the creative and imaginative conceptualizations appeared helpful, but by book's end, they were decidedly cumbersome.

Nonetheless, *The Hero's Journey* is stimulating and interesting, while constituting a somewhat different approach by which an educational community may professionally and personally participate in ongoing critical dialogue on improving learning and transforming schools. The reflective checkpoints at the end of each chapter provide a coherent and integrated framework of follow-up topics to invite discussion from all concerned.

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