



Transforming Curriculum to Meet the Needs of All Learners by Empowering School and Teacher Leaders

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School leaders are currently faced with the difficult task of leading staff to address a number of priorities as they seek to meet accountability standards. At the same time, they must meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and address the challenge of changing beliefs that limit opportunities and expectations for students with disabilities. . Finding a common ground where all stakeholders can work together is key if school leaders are to successfully implement inclusive practices and develop the capacity of staff to address the needs of students with disabilities within high stakes environments.

Collaborative inquiry has been offered as a means to help school leaders and staff to engage in professional learning and decision-making. Current models of CI, however, are generally aimed at individual teachers and do not incorporate processes required for school leaders to implement the whole of school approach needed to create an inclusive culture through curriculum design and delivery. Nor do they empower staff to connect and collectively determine and enact a future of curriculum design and delivery that has mutual benefit for individuals and the group. In response to these challenges the 5Is model of collaborative inquiry draws on foundations of participatory action research and collaborative inquiry to support school leaders to guide staff in intellectual and social processes to identify and engage in the needed actions required to create an inclusive learning culture.

This paper presents a case study, which examines how regional and school leaders used the 5Is model to empower and energize school teams to create inclusive school practice leading to increased academic and social emotional outcomes for students with a diverse range of needs. Using this model, school leaders were able to work with staff to develop a shared understanding of the issues, create a shared vision of inclusive practice, identify goals and actions required to enact this vision, and evaluate the effectiveness of those actions. With a central focus on establishing inclusive curriculum the regional leaders worked with the school principal to lead staff in linking inclusive practice with other priorities under the unified outcome of increasing student outcomes. They were also able to help staff identify how the development and incorporation of a whole school approach to curriculum would enable them to support the academic and social emotional learning of students both with and without identified needs.