

Background

In the spring of 2011, the Oconomowoc Area School District (hereinafter referred to as OASD) contracted Elise Frattura to conduct a comprehensive review of programs and services offered to students with disabilities.

Dr. Elise Frattura is an Associate Professor and Department Chairperson for the Department of Exceptional Education and Administrative Leadership in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Dr. Frattura researches and publishes in the area of nondiscrimination law, integrated comprehensive services for all learners, and the theoretical underpinnings of educational segregation. Dr. Frattura works with school districts across the nation to assist administrators in developing comprehensive organizational structures to better meet the individual needs of all learners. Dr. Frattura had been a K-12 public school director of student services and special education for 12 years. During that time, she functioned as an adjunct professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, teaching courses related to diversity in elementary and secondary administration of services for students with disabilities. Dr. Frattura has written educational articles in the area of administration and leadership in support of inclusion for all learners and is coauthor of two books, *Leaders for Social Justice: Transforming Schools for All Learners* (2007) and *Meeting the Needs of Students of All Abilities: How Leaders Go Beyond Inclusion* (2009). See Appendix A for Vita.

Focus groups were used to learn about the experiences and perspectives of teachers, parents, and administrations to obtain a breadth of information relative to a specific issue or educational practice.¹

This report is organized beginning with best practice, followed by an introduction and core findings within thematic sections, and concluding with a summary of recommendations. The three thematic sections evolved as a result of analysis of district documents, data, and interviewee/focus group responses. Each section is then organized by the sub-themes, followed by theme-specific recommendations.

¹ -Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. In N. Y. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 835-850). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. McLeskey J., & Waldron, N. L. (2000). *Inclusive schools in action: Making differences ordinary*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Development.

Background

There has been much progress in the education of children with disabilities since the passage in 1975 of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010)². Before the enactment of this legislation, the majority of individuals with significant disabilities were placed in institutions with a focus addressing basic care needs rather than on rehabilitation, education, or training for employment. Children were consistently denied the opportunity to be appropriately educated in their home schools with their nondisabled peers. Approximately, one in five children with disabilities were educated in schools (primarily segregated) or were legally excluded from school based on their disabilities (e.g., deafness, blindness).

Federal legislation addressed the denial of these basic rights to individuals and children with disabilities, provided protections for the rights of families to be involved in decision-making about their children, addressed post-secondary transition needs, and advocated for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) educating children with disabilities to the greatest extent possible in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with their nondisabled peers. Support for meaningfully including children with disabilities in general education classrooms, was strengthened. In 1997, IDEA reminded educators that special education was not a place, but a service. In 2004, amendments to IDEA were made to strengthen provisions for holding schools, districts, and states responsible for effectively identifying and educating children with disabilities. These provisions were aligned with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), amended in 2001 and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These accountability provisions addressed the participation of children with disabilities in statewide assessments and their proficiency rate.

Both IDEA and NCLB are up for reauthorization. Many congressional conversations revolve around strategies for better aligning these acts. Specific areas where alignment is supported include the preparation of quality special education professionals, inclusion of students with disabilities in equitable and accessible curriculum and assessment systems, more balanced and effective accountability systems, and effective school reform initiatives that do not negatively impact students with disabilities³.

The National Picture

As of 2010, more than six million students with disabilities receive special education services. Fifty-seven percent of children with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms for at least 80% of the school day and early intervention services are provided

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2010). Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

³ Council for Exceptional Children (2010). CEC's ESEA reauthorization recommendations. Arlington, V.A.: Council for Exceptional Children.

to more than 300,000 infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families⁴. Challenges still persist despite progress in achievement and dropout rates. There is still a significant achievement gap between students with and without disabilities and the gap widens depending on the cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds of students. African American and Hispanic students had the highest rate of being identified as in need of special education services compared to any other racial/ethnic group.⁵ Significant numbers of students with disabilities dropout of high school and the percentage of students with disabilities who do graduate from high school with a regular diploma lags far behind those students not identified with a disability, as illustrated by the following quote “Nationwide, 46 percent of children identified for services under IDEA and estimated to be enrolled as of 4 years prior completed secondary school with a regular diploma in 2005. This graduation rate is 29 percentage points below the rate for children in the total population nationwide who received a regular diploma.”⁶

Currently, across the country, school districts are moving from a deficit-based model of supporting student who struggle to a proactive service delivery model. A deficit-driven model is typically indicative of a wait-to-fail model where the student is the problem and needs to be “fixed.” A proactive model is defined as one where leadership is able to cast a wide net of supports in a comprehensive and cohesive manner through high quality technical assistance and professional development. Such support is often aligned with cohesive position descriptions across general and special education that can be used as an individual professional development tool to develop the capacity of all teachers.

What We Know of Best Practice

(adapted from Frattura and Capper, 2006 – See Appendix B for full additional detail)

For decades, special education services in the United States have been arranged categorically based on the students’ eligibility status for an educational disability and by the type of program model available (i.e. self-contained, resource, mixed categorical, etc.). A program model is one that is arranged by units or programs (e.g., cognitive disability unit, learning disability unit, autistic unit, teen age parents, etc.) and then populated by students who seemingly are homogenously grouped. Students are placed in particular special education classrooms for part or all of a student’s day as determined by their assigned categorical special education label (i.e. learning disability, cognitively disabled, etc.). Instructional techniques and curricular materials are often developed according to a group norm rather than through specific goals and objectives based on individual student educational needs. Student needs are primarily driven by availability of supports, classes, instructional resources and/or teacher preference and students often move as a group to

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2010). Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

⁵ Blackorby, J. Schiller, E., Mallik, S., Hebbeler, K., Huang, T., Javitz, H. Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D., Wagner, M., and Williamson, C. (2010). Patterns in the identification of and outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Executive Summary (NCEE 2010-4006). Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

⁶ Ibid (pg. ES-25)

lunch, art class, and adapted physical education, etc., and are, in most cases, situated apart from the general education system.⁷

Such program models are all too common in the United States, despite more than three decades of outcry from parents, teachers, advocates and scholars in the field. These critics maintain that a program model delivery systems leads to isolated and inferior learning opportunities for students and a lack of access to resources for students within the general educational setting. Program models, critics assert, have thwarted equity and the potential for excellence in academic achievement for a significant number of children with and without disabilities.⁸ Others maintain that teachers in program models suffer from isolation since segregation of programs impedes the sharing of knowledge and expertise in teaching.⁹

Some argue that pull-out models have led to an increase in the number of students labeled with a disability. In addition, students of color are significantly over-identified for special education and over-represented in special education.¹⁰ Equally important is the fact that the program model approach and the practice of labeling students have failed to result in high student achievement as measured by post school outcomes or standardized scores. In the United States, 22% of students with disabilities fail to complete high school compared to 9% of those without assigned labels.¹¹ Finally, program models have also contributed to expensive duplications of services.¹²

Conversely, an integrated service delivery approach has been called for by a number of researchers in the field.¹³ This approach requires schools to align educational services for students with special educational needs within the existing structures (grade-levels, academies, multi-age groupings, looping, etc) rather than through special and pull-out programs. Professional staff are organized by the needs of each learner rather than clustering learners by label. In this model, staff are not assigned to a “unit or program” and placed in a separate classroom. Instead, special and general education teachers work in collaborative arrangements designed to bring appropriate instructional supports to each child in the general school environment. In this manner, an integrated home base for all learners in support of their right to belong within general education is established.¹⁴ Moreover, a variety of curricular and pedagogical options are employed to maximize student learning in large group, small group, and one to one teaching arrangements in environments which can be accessed by all learners, not just those with specific disabilities. Integrated comprehensive services fits neatly with the recently reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act passed in the United States in 2004, an act

⁷ Burrello, Lashley, & Beatty, 2000; Capper & Frattura, 2009; Sailor & Roger, 2005

⁸ Friend & Bursuck, 2002; Oakes & Lipton, 1999

⁹ Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2002; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997

¹⁰ Donovan & Cross, 2002; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002

¹¹ National Organization on Disability, 2000

¹² Odden & Picus, 2000; Odden & Archibald, 2001

¹³ Burrello, Lashley, & Beatty, 2000; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Sailor, 2002; Stainback & Stainback, 1985; Will, 1986

¹⁴ (Brown, 1989)

that has, ostensibly, reaffirmed a national commitment within the US to the education of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

The following core principles are offered to set a reference point between programs for students with disabilities and services. For the purpose of clarification, one core principle of segregated special pull-out is that students do not receive help for their learning needs until after they fail in some way. This practice is akin to the analogy of parking an ambulance at the bottom of a cliff to assist people who fall off the cliff. Special pull-out are the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Students are either placed in them after they fail, or go to different rooms for academic, social, or behavioral support.

In contrast, integrated service models, the primary aim of teaching and learning in the school is prevention of student failure. Referring again to the analogy, integrated services proactively works at the top of the cliff, setting up supports to prevent students from not only falling off the cliff, but preventing them from nearing the cliff in the first place. It is astounding, how few educational practices are considered preventative. The list of reactionary supports includes items such as homework club, learning centers, peer tutors, adult volunteers, Title 1 reading, Reading Recovery, school-within-a school, small group tutoring, Saturday morning remedial club, summer school, calling parents, in and out of school suspension, and the list goes on. Preventive practices are minimal, yet are increasing under Response to Intervention (RtI), such as focused, intensive reading instruction in the early grades or differentiating instruction.

According to Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack (2001),¹⁵ historically, public schools have dealt with student failure in similar ways—blaming the student. Within an integrated service delivery model, the onus of student failure is on the school and any student failure is viewed as something that is askew in the educational system. The way educator's frame student failure (i.e. whether student failure is seen as a student or a systems issue) is the pivot point of all the remaining assumptions and practices in schools.

As such, the primary aim is the prevention of student failure through the development of teacher capacity to be able to teach to a range of diverse student strengths and needs. Every single decision about service delivery must be premised on to what extent that decision will increase the capacity of all teachers to teach to a range of students' diverse learning needs. Segregated special pull-out, by definition, diminishes teacher capacity. When the same student or group of students are routinely removed from the classroom to receive instruction elsewhere, the classroom teacher is released from responsibility for learning how to teach not only those students but all future students with similar needs over the rest of that teacher's career. At the same time, students with and without special needs are denied the opportunity to learn and work with each other, while the students who leave the room are denied a sense of belonging in the classroom.

A third core principle of separate programs is that these efforts do not address individual student needs. Instead, students are made to fit yet another program. Even the language

¹⁵ Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack (2001)

used often reflects this idea. That is, we use language such as “we need to program for this student,” “we held a meeting to program for this student.” We can place the student in the CD program.” “That school houses the ED program.” Finding students to fit into a program is a supreme irony of programs that are created under the assumption that students do not fit into general education, hence they need something unique and individual, only to be required to fit into yet another program. A persistent assumption with this principle is that it is administratively easier to plug a student into an existing program than to creatively plan how to best meet a student’s academic or behavioral needs (both of which are mandated in special education legislation).

Location, where students are physically placed to learn is a central distinction between pull-out programs and integrated services. Under a segregated program model, educators believe that the primary reason for student failure is the student his/herself, that students cannot be helped until they fail and receive a label of some sort (e.g., at-risk, disability, low reader), and then the student is placed into a separate program that is removed from the core teaching and learning of the school. These beliefs and practices then require students to be separated from their peers either by requiring students to leave the general education classroom to attend a pull-out program or to attend a school not in their neighborhood or a school they would not attend if they did not have a special label.

Further, clustering means that students with a particular label are clustered in a classroom or program in numbers greater than their proportion in the school. In the case of students with disabilities, typically a special education teacher is then assigned to support the students in this classroom and perhaps two to three other classrooms where students with disabilities are clustered. In one of the high schools we studied, students considered “at-risk” were all placed in the same “transition” English and “transition” Math classes their freshman year, taught by a “transition” teacher in a “transition” room. For ELL students, the students are often clustered together and assigned a bilingual or ESL teacher for nearly their entire day.

The problem with clustering students in special or general education classrooms is that often student services staff are assigned to the students with labels in these classrooms. Though the special education or student services staff may assist other students in the classroom without labels, his/her primary role is student support. That is, in a segregated, clustering arrangement, the primary goal is student support, not building the teaching capacity of general education teachers to teach to a range of students. The result of such an arrangement is increased dependency. Students with labels and the general education teacher become increasingly dependent on the student services staff. Including students with their peers is dependent on the presence of student services staff. In nearly every situation we have studied, when, because of budget cuts, student services staff time in these classrooms must be reduced; general education teachers then claim that they cannot fully meet the needs of students with labels in their classrooms. This occurs especially in co-teaching models, where a special education and general education teacher are assigned to co-teach a class or course together—arguably one of the most common (and most expensive) practices in schools today.

In addition to educator convenience, segregated practices persist because many educators believe it is more cost effective for educators to cluster students with similar labels in particular classrooms or particular schools. Moreover, this particular administrative arrangement makes little sense with the current federal support for cross-categorical services. That is, now across Wisconsin and other states, departments of education are issuing special education teaching licenses for teachers to be able to teach across categories because these teachers are expected to be able to teach to a range of student needs. In addition, other categorically licensed teachers are being grandfathered through as highly qualified for cross-categorical support. Thus, no longer can school districts use the state that only particular teachers can provide particular support for particular students.

Moreover, with pull-out programs educators persistently assume that they can only provide individual attention and support to students with labels in a setting or situation separate from a student's peers. Reasons for this assumption include several arguments that, for example, an intermediate school student would feel embarrassed to receive speech articulation training in front of his/her peers, or that if elementary students require intensive reading instruction, then this instruction requires a separate setting, like a Title I or Reading Recovery room. Educators reason this saves student embarrassment about reading in front of their more able peers and that a separate room cuts down on classroom distractions. To be sure, it may be appropriate at times when student requiring speech articulation skills could benefit from individual instruction, outside of the classroom that does not disrupt his/her school day. At the same time, when schools/classrooms function with teams of diverse educators in support of flexible groupings, a student's need for one-on-one is part of the general movement of the day and does not force the student to be the only student exiting the classroom, for example, during science class. In the reading example, at the elementary level, successful teachers are able to meet the individual needs of students without students needing to be pulled from an integrated environment.

At the intermediate school and high school level, when teachers are faced with students with low reading levels, at times these students may need intensive reading instruction separate from their peers. The use of a popular program, Read 180, a computer-assisted reading program is one such example (<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/read180>). However, based on principles of inclusion, students choose to access this course or class, and are not unilaterally placed in it. In addition, students who receive this instruction do so not by virtue of their label (e.g., all "at-risk" students assigned to the course, or all "LD" students assigned), but a heterogeneous group of students receive the instruction based on need, not label. Importantly, rather than this same group of students then assigned to other classes together (e.g., they are all assigned to take the same science class, etc.), these students are not grouped together for any other part of the school day.

Referring again to a high school example, educators argue that placing all the students "at-risk" in language arts together in a freshman "transition" English class will allow the teacher to use curriculum materials suited to the reading levels of these students and in so doing, raise the English achievement of these students enabling them to be integrated with their peers after their freshman year. Aside from the fact that we have yet to find special

pull-out that collect sufficient outcome data, teachers in highly successful schools in the context of integrated services are able to teach language arts and other subjects to a range of different learners in heterogeneous classrooms.¹⁶

Ironically, under segregated program assumptions, inclusive practices evolve into another segregated program—i.e., the segregation of inclusion. Segregated inclusion happens when students with disabilities are disproportionately assigned to, or clustered in, particular classrooms. For example, in a school with four, third grade classrooms, students with disabilities are clustered into one or two of these classrooms in numbers that result in a higher percentage of students with disabilities in these classrooms than their percentage in the school. Educators argue that these practices are legitimate because it then becomes more convenient for special education staff to support students across a fewer number of classrooms. Educators in such situations call these particular classrooms “the inclusive classrooms or inclusion programs” and the students with disabilities in these classrooms “inclusion” students. In so doing, these classrooms and students, in the guise of inclusion, inherit yet another set of labels. Educators reason that if a practice is more convenient for staff, then students will receive higher quality services in these segregated arrangements. In the schools we have studied, unfortunately, while clustering students may be more convenient for staff, this model does not build teacher capacity. That is though the “inclusion” and “transition” teachers increase their capacity to teach to a range of students, all the other teachers in the school are “off the hook” with no incentive to gain these skills, resulting in higher costs and less effectiveness in the long run.

In contrast, under an integrated service model, all students attend their neighborhood school or the school they would attend if they did not have a label. This is a basic civil right. Students do not have to leave their peers in their classroom, school, or district to participate in a curriculum and instruction that meets their learning needs. All students are then afforded a rich schedule of flexible small group and large group instruction based on learning needs, interest, and content areas. At the district level, particular schools would not be designated the “ESL school” or “the school where all the elementary students with severe disabilities attend” or “the middle school that houses the students with severe challenging behaviors.” At the school level, integrated and comprehensive services does not preclude students with labels from being clustered in particular classrooms, but only to the extent that the numbers of these students in any one classroom does not represent a higher percentage than found in the school. Accordingly, with ICS, a school does not have rooms labeled the “Resource Room,” “CMC,” the “CD Room,” the “At-Risk Room.” In integrated comprehensive schools, students are flexibly grouped based on the individual needs of the group of learners in the particular classroom and grade.

Accordingly, with integrated services, all students learning takes place in heterogeneous environments. This means that students are never grouped by similar characteristics in the same way all the time. Teachers use flexible grouping patterns throughout the day depending on the instructional content and student needs. Hence, when a group of

¹⁶ Jorgensen, 1998

students travels on a field trip, it should not just be students with disabilities or who are “at risk” who are attending. Nor should it just be students without labels attending. The leader will look at any situation and always ask if there are a mix of students involved, and if not, why not?

The critical role that location plays in to this cannot be overemphasized. As long as segregated settings, classrooms, courses, and schools exist, educators will find reasons to place students in these settings. With pull-out programs (Such as CMC), these settings reinforce negative assumptions about students and teaching and learning, and not only does this model not build teacher capacity, it breeds teacher and student dependency. Even more importantly, pull-out programs are the most expensive and least effective way to serve students. Integration becomes a proactive means to break the vicious cycle of negative beliefs that then require pull-out programs that in turn reinforce negative assumptions and beliefs. When the core principles of inclusion suggest that the system needs to adapt to the student, that the primary aim of teaching and learning is the prevention of student failure, that the aim of all educators is to build teacher capacity, and that all services must be grounded in the core teaching and learning of the school, then students must be educated along side their peers in integrated environments. Student location dictates teacher location and the location of teachers and students in integrated environments lay the groundwork for all the other aspects of ICS.

Educator roles in pull-out programs are based on teacher specialization and student labels. In pull-out programs, staff adhere to their professional, expert roles that limit adult learning opportunities and professional growth. Moreover, when structures isolate students, they also isolate educators. When educators are isolated from each other, they do not share knowledge and expertise with each other, precluding the development of teacher expertise across a range of learners. For example, support staff in a program model may be comfortable teaching segregated math and adapted language arts classes and hesitant to provide support in general education classes in science and math because they were unsure about their ability to do so. Therefore, students with needs are placed in segregated math classes due to the teaching abilities of staff and denied a rich curriculum in the regular math content classes. In turn, students performed quite poorly on the math section of the state-wide accountability assessment.

A persistent assumption that fuels this adherence to expert roles, is a belief that certification in a specialty area means that an educator possess highly specialized, “magical,” esoteric skills that no one else can ever learn. Professional associations and professional accrediting or certification bodies reinforce this expert view.¹⁷ For example, in pull-out programs, a social worker can be the only person who conducts personal history reviews with students and makes contacts with families, and no other staff person volunteers or is assigned to share in those duties. Likewise, in pull-out programs, a middle school guidance counselor provides career guidance to individual and groups of students,

¹⁷ Skrtic, 1995

facilitates support groups for students, and for students with various problems meets with these students individually. Rarely do other staff members share these duties.

Location is where students are assigned and how staff roles are inextricably linked. In pull-out programs, the limited expertise of staff, contributes to where students are placed, and where students are placed, limits the expertise of staff. All students require small and large group instruction, and at times, one on one instruction for a student with more severe needs, however, rather than expecting students with educational or behavioral needs to leave the classroom to receive instruction. An integrated service model requires educators to share their knowledge across disciplines (special education, at-risk, bilingual, Title I reading, etc.) with their peers and with the students they teach in a range of educational environments.

As such, with an integrated model, staff roles pivot around developing teacher capacity to teach a range of learners in their classrooms. Given that only 21% of teachers feel well prepared to address the needs of labeled students (U.S. Department of Education, 2000); building teacher capacity becomes the primary goal in ICS. All staff development and all decisions about service delivery are aimed toward building staff capacity to work with a range of student needs.

In pull-out programs, the curriculum and instruction is separate from the core teaching and learning in the school. For some programs, at one end of the spectrum, it is assumed that the curriculum and instruction did not succeed with a student; hence, the student needs an entirely different curriculum and instruction. Again, the assumption made is that the school curriculum does not need to change, that it works for most students, and that there is something inherently different about some students who need something entirely different. Moreover, this principle assumes that staff are incapable of teaching to a range of students, that schools are incapable of changing to meet student needs, and students are more alike than different. Pull-out programs also assume that students need to be identified and labeled to access a curriculum that meets their needs. In so doing, these programs deny student access to a content rich curriculum which in turn, negatively affects student achievement and results in poor performance on standardized assessments. Instruction is based on the classroom majority rather than individual needs. Alternative schools, whether within schools or out of school buildings are often created on this assumption. Such an assumption supports implementation of "specialized" Math, English, or other academic subjects in a resource room, or in a classroom tracked for such a purpose.

At the other end of the spectrum in special pull-out, special education staff assist students who struggle by helping them learn the general curriculum, but this learning takes place outside the general education classroom, in resource rooms, study centers, or study halls. It could be argued that these practices are not separate from the core teaching and learning of the school. However, again, these practices typically do not build teacher capacity to teach to a range of students. Though students are assisted, support staff typically do not share ideas with classroom teachers who then do not learn new strategies that would

prevent students from needing additional assistance in the first place. Students are then denied access to a content rich curriculum. In contrast, in an integrated model, students receive their instruction with their peers in large and small flexible heterogeneous groups in integrated school and community settings and are supported to do so. As such, integrated instruction is seamlessly tied to and grounded in the core of curriculum and instruction of the school.

Using integrated service model, the curriculum and instruction are built on a culturally relevant¹⁸ and differentiated curriculum.¹⁹ Culturally relevant means that the curriculum addresses the various families, cultures, races, and ethnicities of students in the classroom, not as an added component but is seamlessly woven into the curriculum. Differentiated curriculum is when that the curriculum is designed to address a range of learner needs and achievement levels. Such curriculum is developed under the principle of universal access.²⁰ Universal access means that a lesson is initially designed for a range of learner needs in the classroom, rather than developing a lesson or curriculum, and then deciding as an after-fact, how students with different learning needs may access the curriculum. With these curriculum principles, students do not have to qualify or be labeled to receive access to a rich and engaging curriculum.

In pull-out programs, separate funding sources are accessed and policies are written to support each program for each eligibility area causing replication of services and cost to soar. These policies and programs are focused on fixing student deficits. Often policies are compliant driven and not quality driven, resulting in meeting the letter of many nondiscrimination regulations but never reaching the spirit in which the regulations were written. With integrated services, funding sources and policies are merged with a focus on prevention of student struggle. Resource reallocation forms the basis of funding decisions.²¹ That is, a school leader takes into account sources of funding at the federal, state, district and school levels (i.e., minority student achievement, gifted and talented, alcohol and other drug abuse, special education, Title I, at-risk, bilingual, special education) and then combines these funds in a way to best serve students in heterogeneous learning environments. Staff are also viewed as resources and staff skills and expertise are considered and staff are assigned to students and classrooms based on such core principles.

In contrast, the principles and practices of integrated service models contribute to five non-negotiables for service delivery: least restrictive, least intrusive, least disruptive, least expensive, and least enabling. These five non-negotiables refer to location or where students are placed, the curriculum and instruction they experience, and the role of educators in their lives.

¹⁸ see Ladson-Billings, 1995

¹⁹ Tomlinson, 2001

²⁰ Bremer, Clapper, Hitchcock, Hall, & Kachgal, 2002

²¹ Odden & Archibald, 2001

Given the high cost of special education in times of budget crises and the dismal outcomes of pull-out programs, educators can no longer ethically justify segregated service delivery. Continuing to label students and placing them in pull-out programs is indefensible. This is particularly so when these programs are not effective academically and socially and draw resources away from other effective practices. Supported by the research, integrated comprehensive services can meet the needs of all students. The core principles, combined with the indisputable importance of location or where students learn, the curriculum, and the way educators move out of their traditional roles, all supported by creative reallocation of resources can pave the way for educational success for all students.