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INNOVATION CONFIGURATION

Inclusive Principal Leadership

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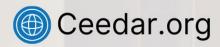University of Texas at Austin

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Innovation Configuration for Inclusive Principal Leadership

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

With the implementation of any innovation comes 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 the application of the criteria to coursework, standards, and classroom practices—are listed in the rows of the far-left column of the matrix. Essential components are derived from the research. See this guide describing the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center (CEEDAR) standards for selecting essential components for more information. 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 in the development and implementation of educational innovations for at least 30 years (Hall & Hord, 2001; Hall et al., 1975; Hord et al., 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).

The use of this tool provides data on the strengths and needs of educator preparation programs that can assist leaders in ensuring that teachers and leader candidates have the knowledge, skills, and practice needed. The IC included in Appendix A of this paper is designed for educator preparation programs, although it can be modified for PD purposes.

Introduction

Children living in the United States have the right to a quality public education that is codified in each state's constitution and enhanced by federal mandates and oversight that require equal protection under the law. Public schools have provided generations of Americans with the knowledge and skills to thrive in our democracy. They have also created pathways to important economic and employment opportunities, as well as a set of experiences that enable students to pursue happiness and a quality life. Students with disabilities needed federal intervention to receive universal access to public education, which began with several federal court decisions and the eventual enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Almost 50 years later, public schools have significantly improved the educational opportunities and experiences provided to students with disabilities. Yet, disparities in opportunities and outcomes persist across disability categories and racial groups, particularly in low-income urban and rural schools (Skiba et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2022; Williamson et al., 2020).

Federal and state governments, districts, schools, and families all play important roles in creating opportunities for students with disabilities to be successful and improve on the progress made during the past 50 years. At the campus level, principal leadership is crucial to the implementation of the nation's current federal special education law—the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Principals have the positional authority to set the school's mission and oversee classrooms to ensure that they appropriately distribute important academic and social opportunities to students with disabilities. Principals also help shape working conditions and resource allocations to support inclusive schools and classrooms. Students with disabilities and other historically marginalized students are more likely to thrive

academically and socially when principals are well-prepared, knowledgeable about special education, committed to inclusion, and take specific leadership practices (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). However, principal leadership does not occur in a vacuum, and preparation, knowledge, and skills only go so far.

States, districts, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and communities are also important to ensuring that students with disabilities receive a high-quality education within inclusive schools. Historic and contemporary social and economic inequalities that exist across the U.S. and within certain states, regions, and locales shape and constrain principals' abilities to create schools that truly include and serve all students. A principal alone cannot overcome persistent funding disparities, a shortage of well-trained general and special education teachers, a lack of district support, and social inequities within communities that limit some families' access to adequate housing, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Yet, imagining any school becoming inclusive without effective principal leadership over a sustained period is difficult. Effective inclusive schools become even more likely to emerge when state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and IHEs work together (Bernstein et al., 2004).

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, encouraging the use of research-supported effective practices (e.g., evidence-based practices [EBPs] and high-leverage practices [HLPs]) in inclusive classrooms and schools. The CEEDAR Center's major knowledge development activity is to identify practices that will help shape SEAs as they coordinate with IHEs, LEAs, and non-profits to integrate EBPs and HLPs into their preparation and practice. Therefore, in this review, we have synthesized what we know about principal leadership as it relates to establishing and

sustaining effective inclusive schools. We define effective inclusive schools as "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 et al., 2022, p. 4)."

Identifying and describing evidenced-based principal leadership in effective inclusive schools presents a unique opportunity and set of difficulties because principals do not provide direct services to students with disabilities. For decades, researchers have documented practices and dispositions of principals who increased student achievement during their tenure on campus (e.g., Grissom et al., 2021; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008). These studies have shaped leadership development and professional standards, including the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL; National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015). Yet, many of these studies do not consider students with disabilities or their achievement and access to the general education classroom. Because these outcomes are rarely reported or considered, this important body of research is incomplete and incapable of adequately supporting a set of evidenced-based effective inclusive principal leadership practices. One explanation for this shortcoming is the fact that the principal's impact on access to the general education classroom and student achievement outcomes for students with disabilities is extremely difficult to measure quantitatively. Principals have complex jobs, and casual links cannot be drawn between their work and outcomes for students with disabilities and inclusion due to substantial methodological difficulties (Bartanen et al., 2022).

To organize and describe principal leadership practices in effective inclusive schools—what we call inclusive principal leadership—we consider peer-reviewed studies that describe

principal leadership in effective inclusive schools (See Appendix A for supporting evidence). We searched for peer-reviewed research studies that describe principal leadership in inclusive schools or schools working to become inclusive from 1995 through 2023. Upon searching the literature, we could not find any quantitative studies that fit these criteria. Within the qualitative literature, many studies outlined principal perspectives of inclusion or documented their self-reported actions. We included these studies if evidence of their effectiveness or impact was provided. We excluded studies that did not adequately describe the principal's role or only evaluated principal beliefs or perceptions about inclusion. We also limited studies to U.S. schools due to the wide variability in special education policies, service delivery models, and conceptions of inclusion that exist across the world. We do reference other research that supports inclusive school leadership, but these studies are listed specifically as evidence in the IC matrix. One final consideration guided the development of this IC—the interdisciplinarity of school leadership and its potential impact on other EBPs that support inclusion and students with disabilities. Since principals have broad authority within the school and have oversight over personnel and programs, we connect effective inclusive principal leadership practice to other areas of evidenced-based classroom and school practices. At times, this review will also draw connections and bring greater attention to the racial identity and linguistic diversity of students as well as other CEEDAR research syntheses that focus on teacher practice or elements of school improvement (e.g., multi-tiered systems of support [MTSS], Universal Design for Learning [UDL], culturally responsive teaching, EBPs for English language learners).

Background

U.S. public schools enroll approximately 6.5 million students with disabilities served under

IDEA (USDOE, 2022). These students make up 12.7% of the total population of students ages 6 through 21; come from racially, culturally, and economically diverse backgrounds; and are classified among 13 disability categories. Meeting the diverse needs of this student population is complex and requires significant coordination among SEAs, LEAs, IHEs, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and families. Each state is unique given its racial diversity, urbanicity and rurality, and access to resources to support public education. Thus, coordinated efforts within states can be contextually responsive and support improved experiences and outcomes for most students with disabilities. For example, students with disabilities are more likely to be included in the general education classroom than ever before. From 2010 through 2019, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day increased from 60.5% to 64.8% (USDOE, 2022). Students with disabilities were increasingly likely to graduate with a high school diploma across that same period.

Unfortunately, while national analyses show promising evidence of improvement, many students with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers in academic outcomes. A recent meta-analysis of 23 studies revealed that students with disabilities were, on average, more than three years behind in reading relative to their non-disabled peers, although reading achievement varied by student disability type (Gilmour et al., 2019). The effects of racism and racial biases have also been a longstanding problem confronting the implementation of IDEA. The disproportionate identification, segregation, and disciplinary removal of low-income students of color remains a significant problem spanning more than 50 years (Artiles et al., 2002; Blanchett, 2006; USDOE, 2022). In 2018, the National Council on Disability described the problem:

> Students with disabilities, in particular students of color and students in urban settings, as well as students with specific disability labels (such as autism or intellectual disability),

continue to be removed from general education, instructional, and social opportunities and to be segregated disproportionately … the opportunity for students to participate in their neighborhood school alongside their peers without disabilities is influenced more by the zip code in which they live, their race, and disability label than by meeting the federal law defining how student placements should be made. (p. 9)

Federal policy and coordinated actions by SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs can help ensure that schools are aware of persistent inequities and adequately resourced and staffed with educators prepared to meet the diverse needs of students.

Principals are critical to effectively implementing IDEA and eradicating longstanding inequities because of their positional authority within schools and because the challenges associated with addressing inequities are often highly contextualized (Tefera et al., 2023). Principals have intimate knowledge of school and district context, the diverse needs of students, and the degree to which the school is prepared and resourced to meet those needs. Consequently, they are well-positioned to engage in strategic efforts to innovate and foster inclusion for students with disabilities. A growing body of empirical research established during the past 25 years highlights the practices principals take in establishing and sustaining high-quality inclusive schools (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Crockett et al., 2019; DeMatthews, 2015a, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Guzmán, 1997; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Keyes et al., 1999; McLeskey et al., 2014; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Naraian et al., 2020; Purcell et al., 2007; Shogren et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Waldron et al., 2011). Findings from these studies and others highlight the principal leadership practices that support inclusion and increased levels of student achievement for students with disabilities.

Much of this research centers on leadership practice within unique organizational and community contexts. Some of these studies acknowledge and examine co-relational forces of oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, sexism, xenophobia) and how they interlock in ways that impact how students with disabilities are served. Many studies also highlight how district policy histories, financial constraints, and insufficient educator preparation pipelines create opportunities and constraints for principals to navigate as they work to establish effective inclusive schools. Some principals who were included in this research were involved as part of district-initiated inclusion (e.g., Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013) while others were initiated by principals, teachers, parents, or others (Billingsley & Banks, 2019). These studies are situated across all regions of the U.S. and in urban, rural, and suburban communities, each with unique contextual variables and nuances.

We focus this review on inclusive principal leadership by organizing our findings within the NPBEA's PSEL (NPBEA, 2015). PSEL was developed as part of a thorough review of empirical research focused on principal leadership and with significant input from more than 1,000 school and district leaders. For this review, we consider principals to be the central school-level change agent for the establishment and sustainability of effective inclusive schools. We define effective inclusive schools as "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 et al., 2022, p. 4). This review also builds upon the PSEL 2015 Standards and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO] & CEEDAR Center, 2017), which is a supplemental document to PSEL 2015 that provides additional inclusive principal leadership guidance.

In the next section, we present research on inclusive principal leadership in alignment to the PSEL standards and the CCSSO and CEEDAR Center supplemental document. We have intentionally integrated insights from other CEEDAR ICs (e.g., Universal Design for Learning, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Evidenced-Based Practices for Reading Difficulties) into the research review. Next, we discuss how SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs can work to improve inclusive principal leadership. Finally, we conclude with an IC (see Appendix A), which identifies the critical knowledge and skills by PSEL standard. Appendix B provides levels of support for EBPs for effective inclusive principal leadership.

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With Professional Standards for Educational Leadership

Table 1 provides a list of the 10 PSEL standards as detailed in the NPBEA (2015). These standards were created to guide professional practice and apply to the work of principals and assistant principals. The standards are also interdependent and cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, these standards make up part of an "interdependent system that propels each student to academic and personal success" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 4). The authors of the PSEL note that the standards exist in three clusters. Standards 1, 2, and 3 focus on vision, ethics, and cultural responsiveness. Standards 4 and 5 focus on curriculum and instruction, as well as a community of care that supports all students. Standard 6 focuses on professional capacity, 7 on professional community for teachers and staff, 8 on meaningful engagement with families, and 9 on operations and management. The final standard, 10 (school improvement), focuses on continuous improvement because it cuts across all standards and clusters.

Table 1. Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL)
1. Mission, vision, and core values
2. Ethics and professional norms
3. Equity and cultural responsiveness
4. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment
5. Community of care and support for students
6. Professional capacity of school personnel
7. Professional community for teachers and staff
8. Meaningful engagement of families and community
9. Operations and management
10. School improvement

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Standard 1 requires that principals support a mission, vision, and core values to promote the academic success and personal well-being of each student in the school. Principals play a crucial role in developing and supporting a mission and vision for effective inclusive schools to meet the IDEA (2004) mandate that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This mandate requires that students with disabilities have "… access to the general education curriculum and the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible …" (IDEA, 2004, Section 1400). Effective inclusive schools have a vision that makes inclusion an integral component of the school's culture. For example, in a study by Shogren and colleagues (2015), school members shared the "belief that all students should be valued and have access to

supports they need to be successful" (p. 180), creating a sense of collective responsibility for students with disabilities.

Research and theory focused on learning organizations underscore the importance of a vision that orients an organization toward key goals. Senge (2006) described how an overarching goal can support organizational change:

> The loftiness of the target compels new ways of thinking and acting. A shared vision also
> provides a rudder to keep the learning process on course when stresses develop …. With
> a shared vision, we are more likely to expose our ways of thinking, give up deeply held
> views, and recognize personal and organizational shortcomings. (p. 195)

In a synthesis of school leadership practices that raise student achievement, Hitt and Tucker (2016) identified vision as one of the five domains positively associated with increasing student achievement. They emphasized that not just the vision is important, as principals need to consider *how* the vision "is decided and subsequent activities that may be just as important as the substance of the direction itself" (p. 545). Thus, principals need to work collaboratively with others so the entire school community can recognize the importance of the vision and are willing to work together toward its fulfillment.

In case studies of inclusive principal leadership, school leaders were clearly committed to inclusion and described their commitments in unique ways. One elementary principal stated, "My personal goal is that we meet *all* kids' needs. You may look at what we need to meet the gifted kid's needs, the LD kids, but because it is an overall need … it didn't turn into a *program* or a *fix* for one group …" (McLeskey et al., 2014, p. 63). A principal of a K-8 school "referred to inclusion as 'general education' and sought to ensure that all children—non-disabled and disabled—received the opportunity to learn in a collaboratively taught classroom" (Naraian et

al., 2020, p. 1245). Another principal of a Title I urban elementary school held a belief that all students can be served in the regular class "if they are thoughtful, have a strong team, and use data to drive their instruction" (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014, p. 858).

In a meta-analysis of inclusive principal leadership, numerous studies documented how school leaders shared their commitment to inclusion and engaged others in the school community in conversations about why inclusion is important (Cobb, 2015). Principals emphasized the benefits of inclusion, stating the importance of "… a sense of belonging" for all students (Naraian et al., 2020, p. 1249). Another principal widely shared a single-page handout that communicated "core elements of the school and how they promote inclusive education" (Shogren et al., 2015, p. 185). Principals also helped staff understand problems associated with segregated settings such as low expectations, high caseloads, limited curricular materials, difficulty coordinating instruction between settings, and stagnant test scores (Coviello & DeMatthews, 2021; Hoppey et al., 2018; McLeskey et al., 2014), among others. Principals challenged teachers' beliefs about inclusion in some settings, sharing, for example, that students needed "segregated classrooms to have their needs met" (Hoppey et al., 2018, p. 30) and the topic of parents' beliefs about the superiority of segregated settings (Naraian et al., 2020). Thus, as principals pursued an inclusive vision, they were in the position of emphasizing what inclusion offered while at the same time challenging beliefs and the status quo.

To support the development of an inclusive vision, principals worked with teams of teachers, parents, and others (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, university faculty) as they considered how to initiate inclusion in the school. Planning teams worked to define inclusion for their context, describe what it might look like in their school and within classrooms, and collaboratively engage stakeholders in decisions about inclusion (e.g., Causton-Theoharis et al.,

2011; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Purcell et al., 2007). For example, Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) described how principals shared leadership with planning teams and sought active parent participation. DeMatthews, Billingsley et al., 2020 detailed how principals who worked toward inclusion helped "staff over time in collaboratively developing the vision to ensure that their values are reflected" (p. 543). The shared leadership approach helped with the planning and acceptance of an inclusive vision and served to sustain inclusion in subsequent years.

Shared visions can emerge from personal visions as they are discussed and negotiated during ongoing conversations (Senge, 2006). Inclusive principal leadership often requires that principals communicate their vision for inclusion as a starting point for establishing a shared vision and that a principal's beliefs about a vision can evolve through ongoing learning opportunities and social interactions. For example, Purcell et al. (2007) found that a principal's inclusive vision evolved during implementation as participants collaboratively designed, discussed, and delivered inclusion. In another case study, both parents and teachers reflected on how the school principal set high expectations for students with disabilities (Francis et al., 2016). Across studies of inclusive change, special and general education teachers worked together, making decisions about what inclusion meant in classrooms as they modified teacher schedules, reassigned paraprofessionals, reformulated classroom rosters, and revised individualized education programs (IEPs; Billingsley et al., 2021). Thus, in descriptions of effective inclusive schools, principals held certain initial beliefs about inclusion but did not dictate how the inclusive vision would be implemented; rather, they made these decisions collaboratively with others.

The fostering of effective inclusive schools was supported through PD by the design of new organizational structures and the use of progress monitoring to assess student learning. McLeskey et al. (2014) described how one principal in an inclusive elementary school ensured that teachers were immersed in high-quality PD that focused on their individual areas of growth, providing them with ongoing learning experiences that were embedded in their work. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) documented how one principal in an inclusive school scheduled time for special and general educators to develop class rosters, a schedule for co-teaching, and "new expectations for how inclusion would strengthen instruction …" (p. 860). In another school, a principal established protocols that allowed special and general educators to work together in grade-level teams with common planning time that allowed them to support specially designed instruction, which also benefited students without disabilities (Shogren et al., 2015). To ensure schoolwide efforts remained aligned with the vision and mission of inclusive schools, principals relied on systems of progress monitoring to assess student progress and inform instructional and placement decisions (Shogren et al., 2015) because inclusion does not always proceed smoothly for varied reasons, such as push-back from teachers and parents (e.g., DeMatthews, 2015b); growing enrollments that overload teachers as they implement inclusion (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014); and inflexible district decisions (e.g., placing a self-contained classroom in an inclusive school; Hoppey et al., 2018).

An effective inclusive school is not one without challenges. Challenges to inclusion can undermine the school's inclusive vision and fracture the school community. Thus, inclusive principal leadership includes a continued focus on being responsive to resistance and maintaining the school's vision amid resistance. In several studies of inclusive schools, principals responded to challenges by encouraging stakeholders to share their questions and concerns, and they

considered how they might be addressed (DeMatthews & Mahwinney, 2014; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). When principals consistently supported an inclusive vision and were responsive to challenges, schools typically became inclusive (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011, Mayrowetz & Weinsten, 1999); however, inclusion stalled when principals did not respond to challenges or did not view inclusion as a priority when other issues emerged (e.g., Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Sindelar et al., 2006).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 2 Ethics and Professional Norms

Standard 2 emphasizes adhering to ethical and professional norms, which are grounded in the promotion of each student's academic success and well-being. This adherence necessitates that principals act as stewards of school and district resources; model professional norms; safeguard democratic values and individual responsibility; and provide moral direction for teachers, staff, students, and families as appropriate. In continuous school improvement efforts, principals regularly confront dilemmas and competing priorities, which create opportunities for ethical decision-making and leadership approaches. Ehrich and colleagues (2015) identified instances in which principals relied on an "ethic of care" (centering human relationships and all voices and authentic individuality; Noddings, 1984; Starratt, 1996) and an "ethic of justice," centering the fair and equal treatment of people (Starratt, 1996). The application of these ethics enables principals to question certain aspects of data-driven decision-making in their district and search for alternative pathways to promote the ethical use of data to inform school decisions and practices. These same ethics have been applied by principals to support marginalized student groups, such as undocumented students and families (Crawford, 2017) and can be applied to inclusive principal leadership.

Ethical leadership is important to ensuring that students with disabilities are successful in inclusive schools. Inclusive principal leadership requires recognizing dilemmas and acknowledging inequities and then making thoughtful efforts to promote inclusion for students with disabilities (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017). Principals often confront dilemmas when creating inclusive schools because the status quo in many contexts has been to remove or segregate students with disabilities and not prioritize funding, staffing, or PD to support inclusive classrooms. Conflicting state and district directives, resource deficits, teacher resistance or unprepared teachers, and disgruntled parents can also create dilemmas and challenges for principals (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Frick et al., 2013). Some researchers have documented non-examples of ethical leadership in which principals avoid involvement in special education processes and delegate their authority entirely or substantially to subordinates who are less familiar with disabilities, special education, and IDEA (Bray & Russell, 2016; O'Laughlin & Lindle, 2015), which means these principals pass on important opportunities to advocate and use their positional authority for students with disabilities. However, principals in effective inclusive schools adhere to ethical norms, identify inequities, and take targeted action to meet the needs of students with disabilities (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Keyes et al., 1999; Theoharis, 2007).

Inclusive principal leadership necessitates a focus that expands beyond recognizing disability and taking actions to eliminate ineffective or deficit-oriented practices that exclude students with disabilities from the general education classroom and other important academic and social opportunities on campus. Rather, principals who create and lead effective inclusive schools focus on effective and culturally responsive practices that extend beyond disability as a binary. They consider multiple student identities (e.g., family background, language,

immigration status, race, gender) and how these identities are valued and supported within a school community. For example, Theoharis (2007) highlighted how seven principals created more inclusive schools by taking into full consideration how ableism, racism, and other forms of discrimination surface in schooling policies and practices.

More recently, DeMatthews et al. (2021) examined the perceptions, practices, and challenges of six principals along the U.S.-Mexico border who were successful at creating effective inclusive schools. The community context was central to how principals conceptualized inclusion because the immigrant community on the border created an imperative for principals to understand not just disability, but also language, race, income level, and immigration status. The principals differed in their primary focus (i.e., improving teacher capacity versus building community more broadly), but each principal applied EBPs for their majority Hispanic immigrant student population. These practices included culturally responsive approaches that valued family languages and culture. Relatedly, the principals worked to ensure that teachers understood disability classifications and how English and Spanish language acquisition develops over time. Some principals went as far as helping families navigate the U.S. immigration system and deal with the potential or aftermath of a deportation event, demonstrating an ethic of care for families and their students situated by a recognition that if students feel unsafe or uncertain at home or in their community, they will not be academically successful.

Standard 2 also emphasizes principal leadership that can "identify, interpret, and manage dilemmas in leadership for students with disabilities" (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017, p. 2). Researchers have identified a long list of potential challenges that can arise and constrain inclusive reforms (i.e., bureaucratic red tape, high-stakes accountability pressure to perform on assessments, problematic state policies, budget cuts, deficit perspectives of students with

disabilities and students of color, teacher resistance, and parent resistance; DeMatthews, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). The development of the IEP is an important team decision-making process that is also an allocative decision. In IEP meetings, principals serve as the LEA representative and are, therefore, responsible for acting as a steward of the district and school's resources. To navigate these complex conditions and difficult allocative choices that can be contentious among diverse stakeholders within a budgetary context with finite resources, case studies of inclusive principal leadership demonstrate how principals enacted an ethic of care and relied upon a democratic participation model to better understand the challenges at hand, make important prioritizing decisions, and learn and adapt to improve decisions often made under sub-optimal conditions (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Guzmán, 1997). However, since human perceptions are bound by both cognitive and social circumstances, even well-intentioned principals in inclusive schools can make unethical decisions that negatively impact students with disabilities, especially if they are not intentional about questioning their decisions and working with diverse teams that allow multiple viewpoints to be shared (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

To buffer against unethical behavior and make well-informed and ethical decisions, principals also should demonstrate "interpersonal and social-emotional competence" and an ability to cultivate trust among personnel and families (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017, p. 2). Schools working to become more inclusive for students with disabilities are often at different starting places and positions due to their unique histories, staffing, and social dynamics. Rarely, if ever, can principals mandate inclusion and expect teachers, staff, and families to follow blindly. Rather, principals in effective inclusive schools work closely with general and special education teachers and take teacher feedback (Hoppey et al., 2018; McLeskey et al., 2014). To

receive open and honest teacher feedback to inform important decisions and be good stewards of resources, principals and teachers must have trusting relationships that allow for open, two-way communication. Thus, inclusive principal leadership is also about promoting democratic values, which requires that principals listen and facilitate dialogue among families of students with disabilities, particularly those who have been historically marginalized and denied access to important decisions that impact their children's lives and education.

Adhering to ethical norms, addressing inequities, managing ever-evolving challenges and dilemmas, and cultivating trust among diverse stakeholders are vital components of inclusive principal leadership that can support the development and sustainability of inclusive schools. This work builds on the mission, vision, and core values of the school (Standard 1) and is integrally tied to the degree to which a school is equitable and culturally responsive (Standard 3).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Equity and cultural responsiveness are the focus of Standard 3 and emphasize that effective principals recognize each student's unique strengths, cultural assets, and needs. Since no two communities or schools are alike, striving for equity and cultural responsiveness requires principals to learn about their school community and their students to develop and support policies and practices that disrupt longstanding biases and address inequities for marginalized groups (Khalifa et al., 2016). Researchers have consistently documented how racial biases; budgetary constraints; and district-maintained, self-contained segregated special education limit opportunities for students with disabilities (Artiles et al., 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Hoppey et al., 2018). In addition, the lack of a well-trained and racially diverse general and special education teacher workforce can reinforce deficit views of students of color and certain disability

classifications, especially when teachers are ill-equipped to engage in research-based teaching and classroom management practices (Billingsley et al., 2019). Deficit-oriented beliefs and limited preparation put historically marginalized students at an added risk of being misidentified into special education and/or inappropriately pushed out of the general education classroom (Bal et al., 2019; Flower et al., 2017).

Inclusive principal leadership fosters an equitable and culturally responsive school, which often requires significant change from prior school improvement approaches. For example, schools may not have (a) assigned the most experienced teachers to the students with the greatest needs (Kalogarides et al., 2013); (b) allocated resources to support special education teacher workloads (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019); (c) developed a master schedule to allow general education and special education teachers to co-plan and co-teach together (DeMatthews & Mahwinney, 2014); (d) authentically engaged parents in IEP decision-making (Bray & Russell, 2016); (e) considered the multiple identities of students with disabilities (DeMatthews et al., 2021); or (f) encouraged students with disabilities to have a meaningful voice in their IEP meeting, transition plans, or school decisions (Chandroo et al., 2020). Inclusive principal leadership necessitates working with teachers and families to make important resource allocation decisions. Such efforts can include significantly changing the school's master schedule; how general and special education teachers are assigned students; and expectations around parent engagement, student discipline, and schoolwide systems such as MTSS, UDL, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and EBPs (Bal et al., 2019; Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Bray & Russell, 2016; Choi et al., 2019; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). To support the development of an effective inclusive school, principals need to cultivate teacher leadership and recruit diverse teams of general and special education teachers to learn more about the

challenges involved in supporting students with disabilities, which, in turn, can be incorporated into future school improvement decisions.

Inclusive principal leadership should also advance equity and cultural responsiveness as principals should be able to recognize that students have multiple identities (e.g., a student with a disability may also be an English language learner, gay, and/or a recent immigrant) as opposed to viewing students as part of one subgroup in the context of high-stakes accountability policies (Annamma et al., 2013). Recognizing the multiple identities of students provides principals with a lens to examine the intersectional forces of oppression limited not just to ableism, but also racism, sexism, and xenophobia, which often work interdependently to maintain inequities (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Several studies highlight that a principal in an effective inclusive school can recognize that a student with a disability may be struggling in an inclusive placement not just because their IEP is not appropriately implemented or because a specific EBP was not implemented with fidelity, but also because other aspects of the student's identity or lived experiences are not being fully valued, understood, or leveraged to support their education. For example, a group of principals along the U.S.-Mexico border considered students with disabilities' family background, family language, and community experiences tied to immigration policies that create uncertainty and fear for many students (DeMatthews et al., 2021). One principal noted, "You cannot ignore who students are … Where they come from, what they may be going through … It's a part of who they are … The more we know, the better we can serve them" (pp. 18-19). These principals communicated that students with disabilities in the general education classroom would not feel included or be successful if they felt unsafe, uncertain, or unsupported with other aspects of their identity and lived experiences.

To create an inclusive and culturally responsive school, principals often must educate and advocate within their schools and communities. Educating and advocating is important to effective inclusive schools because many teachers and families may resist inclusion out of fear, unfamiliarity, or frustration with change (DeMatthews, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2007). Educators and families may also be less familiar with pressing special education issues like the overidentification of students of color in special education and racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline; hold problematic views of student groups (e.g., students with emotional disabilities, students returning from a residential facility); or be afraid of changing their practices out of fear of failure. Inclusive principal leadership requires that principals demonstrate both patience and consistent expectations in efforts to inform others about the need for change given the longstanding institutional forces and historical struggles that have impeded access and opportunities for students with disabilities. Dialogue can be difficult, but ignoring that some educators and families disagree with inclusion could create more covert resistance and sabotage. Principals also cannot wait to enact inclusive efforts until the "hearts and minds" of others are changed concerning inclusion, or they run the risk of making minimal or no change (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2021). In sum, inclusive principal leadership necessitates a vision for inclusion (Standard 1), an ethic of care (Standard 2), and a recognition of the multiple identities of students and how it shapes their experiences within inclusive schools and classrooms (Standard 3).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Principals have the responsibility to support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to foster student achievement in the school, a

challenging goal for principals, as Standard 4 emphasizes the need for curriculum and instruction to be strength-based, "differentiated and personalized," culturally responsive, and considerate of the needs of each student, with assessments to "monitor student progress and improve instruction" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 12). Given the importance of teaching, learning, and achievement in schools, not surprising, principal support for curriculum, instruction, and assessment is associated with greater student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Inclusive principal leadership includes encouraging high expectations for students with disabilities and supporting instructional programs that respond to their unique needs. Yet, many principals lack the pre-service and in-service preparation to identify or support high-quality instruction for students with disabilities; thus, they may need to proactively seek guidance and support for this work. Given principals' lack of preparation, this section provides more in-depth material than prior and subsequent sections and focuses on general education curriculum; IEP development; and effective instructional (e.g., HLPs, EBPs) and assessment practices (e.g., MTSS, diagnostic assessments) important to students with disabilities' achievement and success within the general education classroom. Researchers have found that when principals are supported in implementing effective instructional and assessment practices, like MTSS, they can help improve implementation, which can translate into improved results for students (Choi et al., 2019). Emphasizing that special education teachers need specific instructional conditions to support their work is also important because even the most qualified of these teachers will struggle if they do not have the time, appropriate schedules, space, and materials to support their work.

The General Education Curriculum and IEPs

Principals in effective inclusive schools ensure that everyone in the school understands the requirement that students with disabilities are to be taught the same rigorous content standards as their peers without disabilities, and they are also required to participate in state assessments (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Francis et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2017; Theoharis, 2007).[1] Meeting this expectation requires more than providing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum by being physically present in a general education classroom. Students with disabilities require specially designed instruction and accommodations to make the curriculum truly accessible. Students with disabilities who have access to instruction that meets their individual needs should perform better on required assessments. Principals and school staff should review the performance of students with disabilities on state and local assessments, discuss the importance of high expectations for their learning, and identify ways to improve their performance. IEP teams also need to consider how they will support each student in learning grade-level content standards and discuss accommodations for them to complete state assessments.

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[1] The results of assessments must be reported for students with disabilities in the same way as other students, disaggregated for students with disabilities and English language learners, and included in states' accountability systems (Thurlow et al., 2022). The use of alternate assessments (AAs) is intended for students with significant cognitive disabilities (National Center on Educational Outcomes [NCEO], 2022), as they may be unable to participate in state assessments, even with accommodations. These AAs are based on alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS); however, only 1% of tested students at the state level can participate in AAs (Thurlow et al., 2022). Students learning the AAAS are taught the same grade-level content as other students; however, the modifications typically change the scope and difficulty of the assessments (NCEO, 2022). Decisions about whether students with disabilities should participate in state or alternate assessments are critical as they may have short-and long-term consequences for students (see Strunk et al., 2022). For more information, visit the NCEO website.

Principals or assistant principals often participate as part of the IEP team serving in the IDEA-mandated role of LEA representative, so they must understand not just the legal requirements, but also the curriculum requirements for students with disabilities. Curriculum for students with disabilities extends beyond the general education curriculum to include specific goals in areas such as reading, behavior, transition, and mobility, among many others. Based on a student's needs, an IEP may require specialized materials; related services (e.g., speech-language therapy, physical therapy); assistive technologies (e.g., braille keyboards, augmentative and alternative communication devices); and behavior intervention plans (BIPs). Thus, the curriculum must provide students with disabilities opportunities to achieve within the general education curriculum while at the same time addressing individual IEP goals.

Instruction for Students With Disabilities

Principals in effective inclusive schools communicate with teachers about instruction for students with disabilities, making sure that they understand federal requirements for effective instructional practices. Federal law requires that instruction be specially designed to meet the unique needs of each student, by "changing instructional content, methods, or delivery to meet the student's unique needs …" (Riccomini et al., 2017, p. 21). Students with disabilities may benefit from universal supports available to all students in inclusive classrooms (i.e., UDL), as well as individualized accommodations and modifications[2] that allow them to access the same curriculum content as other students.

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[2] Accommodations allow students with disabilities to access the *same content* as all students (e.g., accessing the material by listening to versus reading a text, taking a test with extended time in a separate setting). Modifications *change the curriculum goal* or *what is expected of the student* (e.g., reducing the concept and vocabulary taught in science). Decisions about accommodations and modifications are documented in the IEP.

Principals also need to foster collaboration among special education teachers, general education teachers, and related services providers as these interactions are necessary to plan, implement, and monitor a coherent educational program for each student with a disability (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey et al., 2017). These professionals need opportunities to share their expertise as they plan and coordinate curriculum, instructional interventions, and related services for each student with a disability. Special and general education teachers often co-teach, providing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum while also providing specialized instruction to facilitate their learning (Weiss et al., in press). Thus, principal support is important to ensure that all teachers are prepared for collaboration and co-teaching and that they have the time and schedules that allow them to meet this crucial responsibility.

High-Leverage Practices

Principals should be well-versed in HLPs, which are effective instructional practices that should be used flexibly across both content areas and grade levels (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009). Table 2 lists 22 HLPs that are relevant for students with disabilities. These HLPs should be of particular interest to principals as this concise set of practices provides an instructional framework and a shared language to communicate with others about effective instruction for students with disabilities. The 22 HLPs were developed by the CEEDAR Center in collaboration with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and with extensive input from professionals (see McLeskey et al., 2017 for detailed information regarding each of the 22 HLPs). A recent review of the literature demonstrated that the assessment, social/behavioral, and instructional HLPs have a strong research base supporting their effectiveness (Nelson et al., 2021) while the collaborative HLPs support the IDEA (2004) requirement that professionals and families work

together to coordinate goals and services to provide a coherent program for each student with a disability.

Principals should emphasize HLPs as they discuss instructional priorities with new teachers and as they support veteran teachers. For example, HLP 16 (use explicit instruction) is a key practice that benefits students with disabilities, and it may require coaching to use effectively. Resources for learning more about these HLPs and PD materials are available on the CEEDAR website and the CEC website (https://exceptionalchildren.org/topics/high-leverage-practices).

Table 2. HLPs for Special Education Teachers
Collaboration   1. Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.   2. Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families.   3. Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.
Assessment   4. Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.   5. Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs.   6. Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.
Social/Behavioral   7. Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.   8. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.   9. Teach social behaviors.   10. Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.
Instruction   11. Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals.

12. Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal.
13. Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.
14. Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.
15. Provide scaffolded supports.
16. Use explicit instruction.
17. Use flexible grouping.
18. Use strategies to promote active student engagement.
19. Use assistive and instructional technologies.
20. Provide intensive instruction.
21. Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.
22. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior. (Note that this HLP focuses on instruction while HLP 8 focuses on behavior).

Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs)

Principals should also be knowledgeable about EBIs, another group of practices relevant for special education teachers. EBIs are scientifically validated and have the strongest evidence base for demonstrating effectiveness in teaching students with disabilities; thus, these practices are particularly valued. Unlike HLPs, EBIs often focus on specific content areas (e.g., reading, mathematics, behavior); students at different developmental levels (e.g., early literacy, social skills; McCray et al., 2017); and students with specific disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, autism).

Principals should familiarize themselves with EBIs, which may require them to request district training, audit a course at a local university, or seek other training opportunities. Then, principals can work with teachers to discuss instruction, including HLPs and EBIs; the specific practices currently used; and how student progress is assessed. In these discussions, principals should ask special educators about instructional conditions that would support the use of EBIs (e.g., schedules, small-group instruction, instructional materials, technologies, PD) and how they might support their collaboration with general educators, related service providers, and paraprofessionals in the school.

Additional resources about EBIs can be found at the National Center for Intensive Interventions (https://intensiveintervention.org/) and the What Works Clearinghouse (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Results?filters=,Children-Youth-with-Disabilities). The CEEDAR website provides numerous ICs related to EBIs (e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, behavior) and other important topics, including instructional technology and UDL, and the IRIS Center at Vanderbilt also includes numerous resources about varied EBPs.

Assessment

Principal support is needed to ensure high-quality instructional programs throughout the school and monitor student progress in the curriculum (Maier et al., 2016). Many states use progress-monitoring systems (Savitz et al., 2018), which include tiered supports such as MTSS, response to intervention (RTI) and PBIS. As districts and schools adopt or create their progress-monitoring systems, principals need to ensure that interventions and assessments are implemented with fidelity and provide valid, meaningful information about student progress and information needed to modify instruction. Thus, progress monitoring provides systematic, data-driven collaborative processes that allow teachers to respond to students' needs (Sugai et al., 2019).

MTSS are configured and implemented in different ways across states and typically include three tiers (Savitz et al., 2018). In Tier 1, all students are provided with a high-quality instructional program. Based on progress-monitoring results, teachers identify students who are struggling with the material taught, providing them with additional support in Tier 2 (e.g., smaller group instruction, creating additional opportunities to acquire the targeted skills). After Tier 2 instruction, students who are making sufficient progress return to Tier 1, and those who have not made progress receive more intensive supports in Tier 3. Tier 3 provides individual

instruction or instruction in a smaller group, as well as more intensive supports and interventions (e.g., Choi et al., 2019).

Principals should be mindful that MTSS is often not well-implemented in practice (Fien et al., 2021). In response, they should focus their attention on several key areas. Progress-monitoring data is meaningful and relevant to teachers as it aligns with the content taught and is, therefore, useful for instructional planning. In a case study of an inclusive school, the principal tracked progress-monitoring data to allocate resources (e.g., distribution of technology, use of paraeducators and co-teachers within the school) and identify areas for PD (Waldron et al., 2011). The principal was clear about the need for data in her daily work with teachers, stating, "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)?

In addition to school-wide progress monitoring, principals should ensure that special education teachers routinely use academic and non-academic assessments to identify the individual strengths and needs of their students to provide more intensive instruction to small groups of students. Special education teachers interpret students' performance on statewide exams, achievement tests, progress-monitoring measures, informal classroom assessments, and observational measures. They also assess each student's response to a validated intervention and adapt the intervention as needed to support greater growth. When a student continues to struggle, these data can be used in conjunction with a problem-solving process referred to as data-based individualization (DBI) to individualize and modify interventions. DBI steps include (1) selecting a validated intervention; (2) evaluating the student's response to the intervention using progress monitoring; (3) using diagnostic assessment to review data (e.g., progress-monitoring data, work samples, observations); (4) adapt the intervention based on what is learned from

assessment; and (5) use progress monitoring to assess student's response to instructional changes (IRIS Module Intensive Intervention: Part 2, https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dbi2/).

A detailed description of progress monitoring and DBI is beyond the scope of this IC. Principals should consider using high-quality, online resources to learn about MTSS systems through the CEEDAR Center, which provides ICs about progress monitoring in both academic and behavioral areas. Other key resources about interventions for students with disabilities include the National Center on Intensive Intervention, the National Center for Student Progress Monitoring, and PBIS.org. Online IRIS modules also provide teacher-friendly resources about intensive interventions, DBI, and progress monitoring.

In summary, inclusive principal leadership includes supporting the learning and well-being of students with disabilities through well-planned curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Principals need to set high expectations as described earlier and make sure that everyone in the school understands that students with disabilities are expected to achieve within the general education curriculum while also addressing IEP goals. Principals further need to help provide a supportive culture, working conditions, and schedules that allow for special and general education teachers to collaborate and co-teach. Principals also support instruction by making sure special education teachers have the necessary materials for specialized instruction (e.g., allowing for flexible instructional grouping, HLP 17 and intensive instruction, HLP 16). Well-planned curriculum, instruction, and assessment can have an even more powerful impact when students are educated within a supporting and caring community (Standard 5).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 5: Communities of Student

Care and Support

Principals have important roles in cultivating "an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that facilitates the academic success and well-being of each student" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 13). In inclusive schools, all forms of diversity are viewed as a benefit, and each student is "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). Students with disabilities in effective inclusive schools have opportunities to participate in school life as they engage with others in general education classrooms and participate in non-classroom activities such as assemblies, field trips, playgrounds, lunch, and school-sponsored extracurricular activities (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). In segregated schools or schools that are still working toward inclusion, some or many students with disabilities are placed in distant and even isolated areas of the school, reducing their opportunities to interact with others in the school.

Inclusive principal leadership plays an important role in ensuring that teachers proactively build positive relationships with their students. Students benefit from positive student-teacher relationships as they are associated with better student outcomes, including greater engagement and achievement (Sulkowski & Simmons, 2017). Positive relationships are characterized by "warmth, open communication, and social support …" (Sulkowski & Simmons, 2017, p. 138). Tomlinson (2014) emphasized the need for teachers to learn about their students and interact with them in ways that communicate to each student that they are valued. She states,

> As a teacher shows interest in knowing individual students and treats them with respect, others notice. It becomes evident that, in that teacher's classroom, people matter, and there are opportunities for all students to learn about one another. The class is also

engaged in a conversation about creating an environment in which each person is seen as valuable and in which the growth of each person is of ultimate importance. (pp. 85-86)

Principals and teachers who view and interact with students with disabilities as valuable members of the classroom community support their participation by modeling positive attitudes and acceptance toward students (Hymel & Katz, 2019). Principals can model the importance of building positive relationships with students and support teachers in similar efforts.

Principals in effective inclusive schools shape routines and activities that can create a sense of caring (DeMatthews, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Theoharis, 2007). Students with disabilities should feel like full members of classroom communities as they participate in the same routines and activities as other students. Instructional activities can support caring environments, such as cooperative learning and peer tutoring, because they provide students with disabilities opportunities to participate in learning with their classmates (Woodgate et al., 2020). For example, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) is an EBI (McMaster & Fuchs, 2016) that supplements the primary reading curriculum (a mathematics version of PALS and PALS for high school are available, as well). During PALS for reading, the teacher pairs a low-performing student with a higher-performing student, and they take turns serving as coach and reader in highly structured 15-minute segments, providing opportunities for peer interactions in carefully designed learning experiences. Principals can connect teachers with EBIs that help build caring environments and ensure that teachers are prepared to implement these activities.

Principals can also ensure that special and general education teachers have adequate time and structure for the planning necessary to build caring environments. For example, participation plans can encourage students with disabilities to participate in the same routines as other students

in the class. In designing participation plans, the special and general education teachers consider these questions: "What are the typical routines of the class activity? What are successful students doing? Was the student with a disability successful in this part of the routine? What is needed for the student with a disability to be successful" (Kurth et al. 2020, p. 142)? Students with disabilities may also have individual IEP goals embedded in participation plans, so, for example, as they study history, they also have opportunities to practice their communication skills with students without disabilities. Researchers who have studied the use of peer supports for students with severe disabilities at the high school level identified some advantages over paraprofessional support, including improved peer participation with academic progress either maintained or improved. In addition, peers serving in support roles were positive about these experiences and would recommend these roles to others (Huber et al., 2018).

Although few studies focus on how principals foster inclusion in after-school settings, students with disabilities should also have access to extracurricular activities, allowing them to participate in groups with others with similar interests (e.g., athletics, cheerleading, art, music, other clubs) and with a broader range of peers in the school and the community. Specific extracurricular activities involving dance or art may also be identified as a related service and be included in the IEP (Osborne & Russo, 2015). Principals and teachers should share information about extracurricular offerings with students with disabilities and their families, and IEP teams should consider needed accommodations as students with disabilities consider trying out for and participating in these activities. Building the professional capacity of school personnel (Standard 5) goes together with building a caring school community and ensuring teachers provide high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Standard 4).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 6: Professional Capacity and School Personnel

Standard 6 focuses on building capacity to improve teacher effectiveness that is linked to strong instructional practices and improved student outcomes. When working with teachers and other school personnel, principals in effective inclusive schools provide multiple sources of high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers and participate beside teachers in these activities. They also identify strategies to motivate teachers and other staff, which includes facilitating opportunities for teachers to prepare for and take on school leadership roles. In addition, these principals hire and retain effective special and general education teachers who have a schoolwide vision and core values that support improved outcomes for each student, including those with disabilities (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017).

Inclusive principal leadership focuses on developing and supporting learning opportunities that allow teachers to improve their practice to better meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities (Waldron et al., 2011). When principals actively participate in teacher learning, student outcomes improve, even after controlling for student background (Robinson et al., 2009). Research has shown at least three distinct benefits of this active involvement of principals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2009), including (1) strengthening the principal's knowledge of what is involved in the application of effective practice in classrooms, (2) improving teachers' perspectives on the principal as a credible instructional leader, and (3) modeling participation by the principal that sends a strong message to building staff about the importance of these activities.

Principals who lead inclusive schools report a recognition that continuous learning is required to build the capacity of their teachers and staff to serve students with disabilities and

that the principal must create conditions within their school that support and value this learning individually and collaboratively (DeMatthews, 2015a; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey et al., 2017; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). In addition, principals leading inclusive schools should understand the nature of high-quality professional learning for teachers that leads to improved classroom practice. These professional learning activities must be tailored to the individual and collective needs of teachers and are embedded in the problems of practice that are most important in a particular school or classroom. Key factors that have been identified as important for increasing teachers' knowledge and skills include (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 (Desimone & Garet, 2015). When considering students with disabilities and others who struggle to learn in school, high-quality PD should address effective instructional practices that have been shown to be effective in accelerating learning for these students. These practices should provide a coherent focus and use HLPs and EBPs (Harris et al., 2017; McLeskey et al., 2017) that are most relevant to the problems of practice in a particular school.

Although observation systems for evaluating teachers have been developed over the last decade (e.g., Danielson's Framework for Teaching), these systems are not a good fit for the research-supported practices that are important to use with students with disabilities and others who struggle to learn (Jones et al., 2022). The shortcomings of these observation and evaluation

frameworks suggest that principals must use a range of different approaches when evaluating special education teachers' instructional practices. For example, several school systems that have been identified as improving outcomes with evaluation systems have all used multiple measures in addition to observation, including student surveys, objective measures of student growth, and PD tied to evaluation (Putnam et al., 2018). Also important is that principals are informed regarding practices that have been shown to be effective in improving outcomes for students with disabilities and others who struggle to learn. For example, the CEC has developed PD for school leaders (https://highleveragepractices.org/introducing-high-leverage-practices-special-education-professional-development-guide-school-leaders) that provides information regarding a coherent set of these practices (see Table 2), as well as videos related to several of these practices as they are used in a classroom.

Principals should also recognize the importance of working conditions. Research has shown that the capacity of special education teachers to deliver effective instruction may be substantially impeded by working conditions that are not supportive (Billingsley et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2000). Principals should consider the conditions in which instruction is delivered when they evaluate the effectiveness of general and special education teachers who teach students with disabilities and other students who struggle. These conditions include both the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers, as well as different types of supports (e.g., class or group size, schedules, technology) that help or hinder their ability to deliver effective instruction (Billingsley et al., 2020). Bettini and colleagues (2016) found evidence that specific working conditions that influence teachers' instructional quality and student achievement include (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.

Evidence related to workplace motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015) has shown that professionals are motivated by several factors addressed in this standard, including a strongly supportive workplace in which they are treated respectfully, opportunities to participate in leadership roles, and a range of supports available to improve their practice. Furthermore, a shared commitment to core values in effective inclusive schools has been shown to be an important factor in motivating teachers and staff to engage in the important work of school improvement across the campus and specific to serving students with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015)

Finally, building capacity for delivering effective instruction to students with disabilities and others who struggle to learn also depends on hiring strong and effective teachers who are committed to and skilled in teaching students with disabilities. Principals leading effective inclusive schools have reported the importance of recruiting and retaining teachers committed to inclusion, teamwork, and serving all students (DeMatthews, 2015a). Given that teachers are the "single largest resource for maximizing student achievement" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 550), principals must recruit and hire strong and effective teachers who are a good fit for a school that is effective and inclusive where expectations are high for the learning of all students. Retaining these teachers is also an important task for principals in inclusive schools. Building professional community (Standard 7) is central to teacher retention and other important aspects of an inclusive school.

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff

This standard focuses on the importance of developing a collaborative professional community of general and special education teachers and other staff who share responsibility and work toward the well-being and academic success of all students, including those with disabilities. Principals who have a positive impact on student achievement convey clear expectations for collaboration among and between teachers and other professional staff and work to establish conditions that are supportive of collaborative, high-quality professional learning to continuously improve teacher practice (Grissom et al., 2021; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). These conditions are reflected in a respectful, just, and democratic workplace that helps teachers exercise discretion while remaining open to criticism, as well as in a sense of school-wide collective responsibility and mutual accountability for the learning of each other and each student. Principals in effective inclusive schools must work to establish these conditions and ensure that teachers have high expectations for their own learning while managing tensions and conflicts as they arise (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017).

Researchers have documented how principals in inclusive schools develop trust and respect with school staff, which serves as the foundation for a collaborative community of teachers and other professionals who share responsibility for meeting the school's vision for inclusion (Cobb, 2015; Francis et al., 2016; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Trust helps build teacher capacity as they learn together, address problems of practice, and share resources with the goal of enhancing the learning of all students (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Hoppey et al., 2018). Principals in effective inclusive schools help facilitate these relationships when they work with special and general educators to establish clear expectations for collaboration and meeting the

needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Evidence has shown that in effective inclusive schools, these types of collaborative endeavors improve outcomes by providing multiple solutions to complex problems and providing school professionals with opportunities to learn from others and share expertise (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; McLeskey et al., 2014). Furthermore, these activities lead to "higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues, improved professional satisfaction, improved instructional practices, better outcomes for all students, and school change that is maintained over time" (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010, p. 59).

Researchers have found that principals support a professional community and collaborative culture by ensuring that teachers engage in leadership roles as substantive decisions are made related to their work (Leithwood et al., 2019). Principals do so in effective inclusive schools by being explicit regarding their willingness to share leadership roles with teachers, allowing teachers to give meaningful input into decision-making processes and empowering teachers to make substantive decisions related to areas such as changes in curriculum and instructional practice (Francis et al., 2016; Hoppey et al., 2018; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). This type of support and related teacher engagement leads to increased teacher motivation and support for school improvements and reflects trust and respect for teachers as professionals.

Principals in effective inclusive schools also build professional community by creating and supporting the development of collaborative teams that engage in data-informed decision-making to determine, for example, the extent to which students with disabilities are making progress toward established goals and achievement standards (McLeskey et al., 2014). These data are then used to continually improve inclusive programs by better supporting teachers to meet student needs (Hoppey et al., 2018). Effectively using data for decision-making requires that principals work with others to create structures and schedules to provide time for this

collaborative work. This data-informed decision-making has been shown to "increase teacher problem-solving capacity allowing schools to not only question long-standing assumptions, but more importantly, provide opportunities to innovate and quickly analyze the impact of innovations to flexibly adjust pedagogical strategies and organizational structures" (Hoppey et al., 2018, p. 24). Moreover, this type of collaborative decision-making serves to provide the school with a mechanism to continually improve the quality of an inclusive school and related student outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2014). Similarly, collaborative decision-making can and should meaningfully engage families and community (Standard 8).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standard 8 focuses on engaging and working collaboratively with families and communities to promote the academic success and well-being of each student. When working with students with disabilities, principals in effective inclusive schools establish strong partnerships with families and seek to productively engage family members in their children's education both inside and outside of school (Francis et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2015). As part of this partnership, principals should be knowledgeable about school community contexts and seek ways to connect with, accommodate, and empower families and communities from diverse backgrounds (Khalifa et al., 2016). Family members should be supported and encouraged to provide information and insight regarding their children that will help teachers understand the student's needs, make educationally sound decisions, and more effectively monitor and interpret student progress (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2017).

To provide a foundation for engaging family members in school activities, including the learning of their children, a range of research has documented the importance of building strong,

trusting relationships and engaging parents in shared decision-making regarding important aspects of school improvement (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; DeMatthews, Billingsley et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2015; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2009). Blue-Banning and colleagues (2004) investigated successful school-family 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); through 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 through demonstrated discretion (i.e., professionals could be trusted with private or confidential information about the family). Trusting relationships provide 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 effective inclusive schools are developed and sustained.

Research has shown that principals often share leadership and decision-making within effective inclusive schools with a range of stakeholders, including family members of students with disabilities (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; DeMatthews, 2015a; Ryndak et al., 2007). For example, Ryndak and colleagues (2007) investigated a district-wide initiative to support the development of inclusive schools and found that parents were actively involved on leadership teams at the district and school levels. The distribution of roles on school leadership teams was important in engaging and building trust with family members as they were involved in substantive responsibilities regarding the development and continuous improvement of effective inclusive schools. These types of roles also may often result in a greater sense of involvement for family members in their child's education, as well as higher expectations for their child's success in school (Goodall, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2019).

Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) have described three important reasons to engage family members of students with disabilities as inclusive schools are developed. These include (1) special education's long history of parent advocacy, coupled with federal and state laws that mandate parent involvement in their child's education; (2) the emotionally charged and controversial nature of school improvement related to inclusion and the high stakes attached to potential outcomes; and (3) the knowledge that is demanded if inclusion is to be successful for students with a wide range of disabilities. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) provide further insight into the importance of this type of parent involvement, as they noted that many principals confront resistance from parents because previous experiences partnering with schools or with inclusion were negative due to implementation problems. This research leads to the conclusion that strong leadership for the development of effective inclusive schools must not just come from inside the school, but also from parents who know their children better than anyone else and have insight into a school's history related to special education programs. Although developing these relationships can be difficult at times, they are instrumental in helping principals and other school personnel implement and sustain effective inclusive schools in the long term.

Further insight into the critical roles of family members in supporting schools is provided by Robinson and colleagues (2009), who conducted a comprehensive review of parent engagement in schools that addressed the types of family connections that made the biggest difference in student outcomes. Family involvement was found to have a moderate effect on their children's learning while the strongest effect was found for interventions designed to support family members or others in the community in working with children outside of the school (e.g., at home). These outside-of-school practices were most effective when they were explicitly related to teaching and learning, such as brief interventions that parents could use to support their

children's learning, as well as when they were coordinated with teacher professional learning aligned with parent contributions and community funds of knowledge.

In sum, principals can foster important connections with family members by focusing on teaching and learning and providing opportunities to learn from parents through these activities. For example, teachers can learn about a student's home culture and funds of knowledge to design units of instruction, thus providing more high-quality, engaging instruction both at home and at school based on these mutually beneficial connections between family members and teachers. Similarly, families of students with disabilities can provide information for teachers regarding a student's interests, cultural background, and needs related to their student's disability, which can be useful to teachers as they plan, implement, and evaluate ongoing instruction (DeMatthews & Mahwinney, 2014). Effective school operations (Standard 9) can bolster the professional capacity, school community, and meaningful engagement with families (Standard 8).

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 9: Operations and Management

Standard 9 focuses on the effective and efficient management of school operations. School operations consist of developing a budget aligned with the school's mission and vision, cultivating relationships with district personnel and external partners, developing and monitoring data and communication systems, and effectively managing physical and human resources. Principals leading effective inclusive schools should understand how to enhance school operations to support students with disabilities. For example, principals in effective inclusive schools create budgets and advocate for resources to ensure that students with disabilities have access to high-quality instruction, support, and services in the least restrictive environment (Cobb, 2015). In one case study of an inclusive school, the principal established a school

advisory team to assist with budgeting in alignment with the school's inclusive vision and goals (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). Other principals of effective inclusive schools report working with district personnel to better understand their budgets to be more effective advocates for additional district resources (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). When school and district resources are insufficient despite advocacy efforts, principals should seek external support and leverage partnerships with families and outside organizations for additional financial and human capital (Trainor, 2010).

Principals can also maximize available resources by partnering with nearby schools within their enrollment feeder pattern. For example, in one study, a principal in an effective inclusive school worked with nearby schools in their enrollment feeder pattern to successfully transition students with disabilities into a new school at a key transition point (e.g., elementary to middle school, middle school to high school; DeMatthews, 2015a). Principals can have teachers or staff attend IEP meetings at feeder campuses in the year before a transition into their school to help ensure that the child's IEP is well-written and aligned with the school's programs and opportunities. Engagement with nearby schools that worked with a child in the past can also help teacher teams problem-solve when a newer student is struggling and teachers are unsure of how to proceed.

Principals in effective inclusive schools also enhance operations by working closely with staff to develop teacher and bell schedules, student caseloads and rosters, delegation of administrative duties, and instructional and planning time schedules to maximize opportunities for co-teach, co-planning, and co-assessing (Billingsley et al., 2021; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). One often overlooked area of principal leadership is effectively managing and supporting special education teachers, a critical human resource within

the school. Researchers have found that working conditions and administrative support are key factors that contribute to special education teacher burnout and turnover (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), so principals should be attentive to fairly assigning workload duties and providing meaningful PD opportunities. To plan effectively, principals in effective inclusive schools establish teams with a diversity of expertise that includes general and special education teachers, bilingual education teachers, counselors, social workers, instructional coaches, and other key personnel (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews, 2015a; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). This level of engagement can enhance school operations. For example, one special education teacher in an effective inclusive school described her school as a "well-oiled machine, where all the parts fit in. Everything is set up as best we can to meet children's individual needs" (McLeskey et al., 2014; p. 66).

During the school year, progress monitoring and consistent communication among educators and families are important to ensure that students are receiving supports and services and making adequate progress on IEP goals (Choi et al., 2016). Principals are in a pivotal position to ensure that information is regularly communicated throughout the school and with families as appropriate. They should be intentional about creating and leveraging data and communication systems to systemize how educators and families monitor student experiences and outcomes. For example, principals in effective inclusive schools report creating and sometimes leading weekly or bi-weekly meetings with special education teachers and related service providers to plan for upcoming meetings, identify missed services or emergent challenges, and develop communication strategies to keep families and other teachers working with the child updated on important information (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Finally, principals should act as stewards of school and district resources. To protect school and district resources, principals must act ethically, adhere to IDEA regulations, and be mindful of how special education litigation can impact their school and district. When schools do not adhere to IDEA requirements, they place their district at risk of additional costs that can impact the provision of education across a district. As LEA representatives on IEP teams, principals must also be stewards of school and district resources. In this role, principals must ensure that each child receives a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through allocative decisions made in the IEP process, but they must also be mindful that they may not be able to overdeliver given financial constraints that are part of public education in every state, district, and community.

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 10: School Improvement

Standard 10 is focused on continuous school improvement to achieve the school's vision and mission. Continuous school improvement for inclusion requires that principals consistently "emphasize the 'why and how' of change so that all staff are motivated and empowered to own improvement initiatives" (CCSSO & CEEDAR Center, 2015, p. 14). As previously noted, principals in effective inclusive schools work with teachers and families to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility that allows change to take root and be sustained. As discussed in prior standards, principals collaborate with teachers, staff, and families to engage in strategic planning processes and cultivate a meaningful vision and goals to accomplish. However, districts, schools, and communities consistently change. Thus, to sustain and improve inclusive schools, principals must engage in continuous school improvement work to remain responsive to changes.

Most research on inclusive principal leadership focuses on the beginning of the school improvement process, where effective principals establish an imperative for improvement rooted

in data and aligned to the school's vision and district's priorities (Cobb, 2015; DeMatthews, 2015a; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McLeskey et al., 2014). These case studies document how principals help the school community understand the process for continuous improvement and cultivate a sense of commitment to reaching school improvement goals. Early improvement efforts for including students with disabilities can be difficult. For example, one principal noted, "We are holding on by a shoestring. Some of my teachers are getting burned out; there's a huge implementation dip, but things are getting better. We're going to make it, but next year will be so much better" (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014, p. 861).

In the months and years following an initial school improvement plan and planning process, principals should work with teachers and staff to assess emergent trends, evaluate successes, inquire into shortcomings and challenges, and adapt school improvement strategies to respond to what has been learned since the plan was initiated (Bryk et al., 2015). In a study of two principals working to include students with emotional disabilities in the general education classroom, both principals worked with teachers and staff to progress monitor and revise their plans in real time (DeMatthews, 2018). This close work allowed the school to shift resources and be adaptive to emergent needs. Such short- and long-term learning cycles allow schools to learn and adapt in the present while remaining consistent and coherent in their efforts over time.

While few studies have focused on the sustainability of effective inclusive schools (e.g., Sindelar et al., 2006), the impact on principal turnover or multiple principal turnover events on campus can seriously disrupt school improvement efforts, teacher retention, and learning outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Therefore, principals in effective inclusive schools should be engaging in continuous school improvement efforts. These efforts

should include building leadership and school improvement capacity and succession planning for inevitable turnover in leadership.

Implications for SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs

Principals do not bear the sole responsibility for creating and sustaining effective inclusive schools for students with disabilities. Rather, principals play an important leadership role but must be supported by IHEs, SEAs, and LEAs to be successful (Burstein et al., 2004). Numerous studies and analyses conclude that principals are under-prepared to lead inclusive schools (DeMatthews, Kotok et al., 2020; Gilson & Etscheidt, 2022; Pazey & Cole, 2013; Wakeman et al., 2006). IHEs play an important role because they prepare general and special educators, as well as related service providers, assistant principals, principals, and district leaders.

IHEs should review their programs and look for opportunities to strengthen coursework and clinical experiences in special education, inclusive schooling practices, EBIs, and cultural responsiveness. For example, educator and leader preparation program faculty might partner with expert faculty in other departments to develop coursework and enhance program learning experiences. Specifically, colleges of education might incentivize academic departments to collaborate so that education leadership faculty have opportunities to plan and teach with faculty in other departments, such as special education, bilingual education, and teacher education.

IHEs can strengthen their programs by ensuring that aspiring leaders have multiple opportunities for exposure to the concepts of inclusive principal leadership in multiple domains (Cowart Moss, 2020). These programs might revise coursework so that students recognize how inclusive leadership and instructional leadership are aligned and how to engage in budgeting and developing a master schedule for an inclusive school. The IC matrix for syllabus review can be a

valuable tool for enhancing programs. Through this review process, IHEs may find that they are not putting the ideas they espouse into practice in authentic ways. This kind of awareness spurred educational leadership faculty at Georgia State University to completely redesign their program of study to infuse inclusive leadership in each course (Cowart Moss, 2020).

Researchers have found examples of how partnerships between districts and IHEs can help provide principals and teachers with the skills, resources, and support to navigate complexities and challenges inherent to inclusive reform efforts (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011). IHEs should also strive to be partners in creating a supportive policy context that prepares and supports teachers and leaders and makes available appropriate supports and resources to aid the complex, contextualized, and time-sensitive school and classroom-level changes necessary to support students with disabilities (Berry et al., 2019). University-district partnerships that engage in targeted recruitment, curricular redesign, and continuous improvement cycles can help ensure that leadership development programs prepare aspiring school leaders for principalship (Herman et al., 2022), including the EBPs necessary to foster and sustain inclusive schools. They can also recruit more teachers with special education experience to enter leadership development programs.

SEAs have a constitutional responsibility to provide a quality education to all students within the state and are also responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of IDEA. Thus, many SEAs provide regular guidance, resources, monitoring, and support to both IHEs that prepare educators and leaders, as well as districts and schools. SEA chiefs and their leadership teams need to think critically about how they support and monitor special education and statewide strategies that support inclusive principal leadership (CCSSO, 2023). Their efforts should move beyond compliance with IDEA indicators and include a focus on preparing leaders

and educators to work in effective inclusive schools. State policymakers and SEAs can set requirements for educator and leadership licensure and adopt standards that reflect what these educators need to know and be able to do before entering schools and classrooms (National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 2021). Some SEAs, such as the Georgia Department of Education and Ohio Department of Education, have been more strategic in advancing inclusive leadership practice by engaging and working with educational leadership faculty and educational leadership faculty organizations to share ways inclusive leadership can be embedded or enhanced within preparation programs. SEAs can also support the development of statewide leadership teams to provide a forum for broader discussions, focused PD, sharing of curriculum and assessments, and targeted implementation of inclusive leadership strategies across the state.

LEAs also play an important role in creating and sustaining effective inclusive schools and their leaders and educators. Superintendents craft their districts' vision and mission, as well as set key priorities, which can include a focus on inclusion and the experiences and outcomes of students with disabilities. In many states, LEAs also make important decisions about teacher and principal evaluation systems, teacher and administrator induction and mentoring programs, and the potential models and PD supports to enact EBPs and inclusive reforms. Superintendents, special education directors, and principal coaches and supervisors can also play an important monitoring and support role to ensure that schools are making appropriate progress as they strive to be inclusive and offer support as schools work through implementation challenges. In addition, districts can work to ensure that principals can hire educators and other professionals with expertise in special education and disability to support inclusion, implement evidenced-

based teaching practices for students with disabilities, and ensure compliance with IDEA (NASSP, 2021).

The important work IHEs, SEAs, and LEAs can engage in to support principals and effective inclusive leadership will take time and require sustained investment and trust among and across institutions. However, over time, these partnerships and investments will create powerful networks and communication loops that can individually and collectively enhance the work of SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs. SEAs interested in beginning this work can look to other states that have more experience and begin to review their partnerships and efforts to work with and learn from LEAs and IHEs. These investments can lead to a better-prepared educator and leader workforce ready to create and sustain inclusive schools.

Conclusion

Principal leadership is critical to ensuring that schools continue to improve and create cultures where *each student* can thrive and meet their potential. Principals are responsible for leading inclusive schools that ensure that all members of the school community welcome and value students with disabilities and collaborate with families and other professionals to support high expectations for their learning. We emphasize the importance of supporting students with disabilities within the general education curriculum in ways that facilitate meaningful participation in classroom communities while addressing their specific learning, behavioral, and transition goals. Finally, facilitating the development of positive working conditions and professional learning experiences that support ongoing learning and teacher effectiveness is crucial. As we have emphasized, IHEs, LEAS, and SEAs have critical roles in creating the partnerships necessary to prepare and support principals' effectiveness for inclusive leadership roles.

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Appendix A
Innovation Configuration: Inclusive Principal Leadership

Essential Components	Implementation Levels				
Instructions: Place an X under the implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.	**Level 0**	**Level 1:** Instruction	**Level 2:** Observation	**Level 3:** Application	**Rating**
	No evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	Must contain at least one of the following: reading, lecture/ presentation, discussion, modeling/ demonstratio n, or assessment.	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.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1 and at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small-group student teaching, or whole-group internship.	Rate each item as the number of the highest level receiving an "X".

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values					
1.1 Work collaboratively to develop a mission and vision for their inclusive school that supports the success of all students, including students with disabilities.					
1.2 Ensure a shared understanding of and mutual commitment to this inclusive mission and vision among faculty and staff and shape practice accordingly.					
1.3 Involve parents, including parents of students with disabilities and other external stakeholders in the visioning process and consistently engage them as partners in this work.					
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms					
2.1 Adhere to ethical and professional norms and uphold the moral imperative to acknowledge inequities.					
2.2 Possess an ethical mindset to identify, interpret, and manage the					

ethical dilemmas in leadership for students with disabilities.				
2.3 Lead with interpersonal competence and develop productive relationships with all populations of students; faculty; and parents by communicating effectively, cultivating interpersonal awareness, and building trust.				
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness				
3.1 Ensure the academic success and well-being of each student, including students with disabilities, through equitable access to effective teachers, contextually focused learning opportunities and supports, and necessary resources.				
3.2 Hold asset-based rather than deficit-based perspectives of students and recognize relationships among disability, cultural differences, and social inequities.				

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment					
4.1 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 multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).					
4.2 Work collaboratively with classroom teachers to help them develop their capacity for effective instruction for each student.					
4.3 Ensure that evidence-based practices (EBPs) and high-leverage practices (HLPs) are implemented.					
4.4 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.				
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 5: Communities of Student Care and Support				
5.1 Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy environment that meets the needs of each student, including students with disabilities, and encourages them to be active, responsible members of their community.				
5.2 Ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities to learn with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate.				
5.3 Promote inclusive social environments that foster acceptance, care, and a sense of value and belonging in adult-student and student-peer relationships.				

5.4 Support teachers as they create productive and inclusive environments in their classrooms and throughout the school.					
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 6: Professional Capacity and School Personnel					
6.1 Hire and retain highly effective special and general education teachers with a schoolwide vision and a set of core values that support improving achievement and outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.					
6.2 Provide multiple sources of high-quality, meaningful professional learning and development opportunities and participate alongside their staff.					
6.3 Identify strategies to motivate their staff and encourage, recognize, and facilitate leadership opportunities for teachers and staff who effectively educate students with disabilities.					

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff					
7.1 Encourage teachers to set high expectations for and engage in active self-assessment and reflective learning to promote mutual accountability for every student, including students with disabilities.					
7.2 Maintain a just and democratic workplace that gives teachers the confidence to exercise responsible discretion and be open to criticism.					
7.3 Promote collaborative cultures focused on shared responsibility for achieving the mission and vision of the school and for the success of students with disabilities.					
7.4 Communicate clear expectations for collaboration within and among established teams of teachers, including general and special education teachers, without micromanaging and encourage experimentation among teams.					

7.5 Manage tensions and conflict while developing conditions for productivity, including effective professional development (PD), practice, and support to staff.					
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community					
8.1 Create partnerships with a diverse group of families, including families of students with disabilities, and engage them purposefully and productively in the learning and development of their children in and out of school.					
8.2 Engage families to provide insight about their children's specific disabilities that allows teachers to better understand their needs, make educationally sound instructional decisions, and assist in interpreting and assessing student progress.					

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 9: Operations and Management					
9.1 Manage budgets and develop strong relationships with central offices to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources and ensure that students with disabilities have access to appropriate transportation, classrooms, services, accommodations, and extracurricular activities.					
9.2 Ensure that external resources are aligned with their schools' goals and support core programs and services for each student.					
9.3 Assign roles and responsibilities to optimize staff capacity to address each student's learning needs, especially students with disabilities.					
9.4 Develop and effectively manage school structures, schedules, operations, and administrative systems that support students with disabilities.					

Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 10: School Improvement					
10.1 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.					
10.2 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.					
10.3 Address teacher capacity needs around the identification, implementation, and evaluation of 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.					
10.4 Ensure that the specific needs of students with disabilities are intentionally addressed within the					

school's broader plans for improvement.					

Appendix B
Levels of Support for Evidenced-Based Practices for Effective Inclusive Principal Leadership

To identify evidence-based practices (EBPs) for effective inclusive principal leadership, we searched for peer-reviewed research studies and meta-analyses that described principal leadership for inclusion in public schools from 1995 through 2023. Upon searching the literature, we could not find any quantitative principal leadership studies that evaluated the principal's role in creating a more inclusive school or raising student achievement for students with disabilities. Within the qualitative literature, many studies outlined principal perspectives of inclusion or documented their self-reported actions associated with inclusion but did not provide evidence of their effectiveness or impact. Consequently, the studies included in this IC had to clearly describe the work of the school principal in supporting inclusion. In addition, the studies included needed to provide evidence that progress was made during the principal's tenure toward greater inclusion of students with disabilities. We excluded case studies that did not adequately describe the principal's role or in which the principal was ineffective or the school failed to make adequate progress toward inclusion. We also limited studies to U.S. schools due to the wide variability in special education policies, service delivery models, and conceptions of inclusion that exist across the world. As a result of this selection process, the CEEDAR Level of Evidence rating for each essential component is emerging or

limited. The studies provided as supportive research focus specifically on inclusive education leadership and do not include broader studies focused on principal effectiveness and principal leadership not specific to creating, improving, or sustaining effective inclusive schools.

Essential Components	CEEDAR Level of Evidence	Supportive Research
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values	Emerging/Limited	Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Cobb, 2015; Coviello & DeMatthews, 2021; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey et al., 2018; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McLeskey et al., 2014; Naraian et al., 2020; Purcell et al., 2007; Shogren et al., 2015; Sidelar et al., 2006
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms	Emerging	DeMatthews, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Guzmán, 1997; Hoppey et al., 2018; Keyes et al., 1999; McLeskey et al., 2014; Theoharis, 2007
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	Emerging/Limited	DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Emerging/Limited	DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey et al., 2017; National Center for Intensive Interventions (https://intensiveintervention.org); Nelson et al., 2021; What Works Clearinghouse (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/); Sugai et al., 2019
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 5:	Emerging/Limited	Brock & Huber, 2017; Carter et al., 2015; 2016; DeMatthews, 2015b; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Kurth et al., 2020; McMaster & Fuchs, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Woodgate et al., 2020

Community of Student Care and Support		
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 6: Professional Capacity and School Personnel	Emerging	DeMatthews, 2015a; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Hoppey et al., 2018; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Waldron et al., 2011
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Emerging/Limited	Cobb, 2015; DeMatthews, Billingsley et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2016; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Hoppey et al., 2018; McLeskey et al., 2014; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	Emerging/Limited	Billingsley & McLeskey, 2014; Blue-Banning et al., 2004; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews, Billingsley et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2016; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2007
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 9: Operations and Management	Emerging	Choi et al., 2016; Cobb, 2015; DeMatthews, 2015a; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013
Inclusive Principal Practices Aligned With PSEL Standard 10: School Improvement	Emerging	Cobb, 2015; DeMatthews, 2015b, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McLeskey et al., 2014