

# **Module II: Teachers as Leaders for Inclusive Schooling: Why, What, and How**

**Jennifer York-Barr, Jennifer Sommerness, and Gail Ghere**  
University of Minnesota



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## **Teacher Leader Case 1**

### **Wendy: Junior High Special Educator**

Harrison Junior High (pseudonym) is an urban public school that serves 838 students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The school is diverse economically, culturally, and linguistic-ally. Fifty-eight percent of students receive free or reduced lunch, double the state average. Students are 38% white, 26% African American, 25% Asian, 10% Hispanic, and 1% American Indian (compared with respective state averages of: 79%, 9%, 5%, 4% and 3%).

Wendy has been a special education teacher at Harrison for six years. She teams with Karen, another special educator, to support 22 students with moderate to severe disabilities throughout the day. Together they direct the work of 11 paraprofessionals who directly support the students. Historically, students with disabilities had not been included in regular school life at Harrison, but Wendy created a system to effectively support the kids on her caseload within general education settings. She intentionally aligns student needs and interests with learning opportunities in general education classes. She then works directly with paraprofessionals to develop their knowledge, dispositions, and skills to individually support students. This has required a high level of ongoing communication and relationship building with general educators and with school level personnel, such as administrators and counselors. Following is a typical day in the life of Wendy at Harrison.

Harrison operates on a 4-period, alternating day schedule, with periods 1-4 on one day and periods 5-8 on the next day. At 6:30 when Wendy arrives at school, she re-writes the daily student and paraprofessional schedules on the blackboard to accommodate for student or paraprofessionals absences, curricular and instructional supports needed for the day's classes, and specialist and itinerant services and schedules. Wendy thinks about the current performance and individualized learning goals and interests of each student and when and where the goals will be specifically addressed across the day. Paraprofessional schedules change from day to day depending on the levels of adult support that each student needs, as well as the activities that are planned for each general education classroom or other setting.

Today's schedule for paraprofessionals takes into account a conversation Wendy had with the Social Studies teacher yesterday. The teacher told Wendy that one of the students could go without a paraprofessional because the student would be in a cooperative learning group, studying Egypt, and that the peers in that group work well with the student. Wendy was delighted with this initiation by the Social Studies teacher and wrote a note to the student's parents indicating how they could practice with him for today's group work.

Wendy now prepares for a before school meeting with the seventh grade Language Arts team. (She and Karen divide to participate in all subject area teacher meetings). Wendy co-teaches with one of the Language Arts teachers during a period in which three students on her caseload are included. During the team meeting she touches base with all the Language Arts teachers about the students with disabilities in their classes, addressing any student, adaptation, or paraprofessional issues. Wendy's participation with the Language Arts team over the past five years has allowed her to learn the Language Arts curriculum and build relationships with the teachers, resulting in effective and supported inclusion of students in those classes. She is responsive to the general education teachers and has been a resource of ideas and strategies for working with other students. By working together, a shared vision of inclusive learning has emerged within this team.

The paraprofessionals arrive shortly before the students. Wendy visits briefly with each one before they begin assisting students for the day. Prior to this school year, Wendy and Karen had regular homeroom assignments and valued serving in this way. However, given the unpredictable nature of school starts for the students with disabilities and paraprofessionals, Wendy reluctantly asked for relief this duty. The principal understood the importance of a steady start for the school day and also the critical role of Wendy and Karen in that regard. So, he agreed. Initially, there was a stir among the staff about this relief of regular duties but by remaining positive and continuing to build understanding and relationships with staff, most staff recognized the dilemma and eventually were supportive.

On days when there is no early morning crisis to address, Wendy uses homeroom time to return phone calls to parents, read student notebooks returned from home, and generally connect with families, teachers, and other support personnel. Wendy views one of the most important dimensions of her work as communicating with parents. She knows they are the long term continuity and support for their children and strives to support them in whatever ways possible.

For Wendy, the first period of the day is spent in Language Arts. As discussed by Wendy and the Language Arts teacher, they split the class into small, rotating groups, with the students with disabilities integrated into regular groups. Wendy and the Language Arts teacher share the responsibility for both planning and teaching this class. Students with and without disabilities have benefited from this partnership.

During second period Wendy monitors student performance by going into classes in which students may be learning with or without the support of a paraprofessional. Today she starts in Chorus and observes a student to be sure she is doing well without personal support. Wendy notes ideas for accommodations and puts a reminder in her calendar to check in with the Chorus teacher later. Next, she goes to the Social Studies class in which the student mentioned earlier is supposed to be participating independently with his cooperative peer group. The paraprofessional is in the class, even though he was scheduled to be elsewhere during this time. Wendy has observed that this paraprofessional has difficulty fading support to allow greater student independence. She

quietly invites him to come with her to the resource room, where she takes 15 minutes to coach him about the level of supports he can offer based on individual student needs. She gives him a follow-up activity to take back into the Social Studies class. The activity prompts him to reflect on the natural supports available to the student within the classroom, the prompts he regularly uses to support the student, and how his prompts can be faded to foster greater independence by the student in the class. Still during second period, Wendy goes to an advanced math class, where Annie, who has autism, is supported by a paraprofessional named Mrs. Dennis who has supported Annie for years. Today, Wendy takes on the direct support role. She wants to figure out the most effective way to physically support Annie's arm while using her communication device. This also gives Mrs. Dennis an opportunity to observe how Wendy works with Annie. After awhile, Mrs. Dennis resumes working with Annie and Wendy coaches her on new ways to provide support for communication.

The last part of second period is always devoted to a small group of students who work on homework in the media center. Depending on the day of the week, there are 4 to 6 students from Karen and Wendy's caseload in the center. Wendy is responsible for the last part of second period everyday, which gives the paraprofessionals their morning break. She is glad to have this time to work individually with the students. Wendy has also been deliberately nurturing a partnership with the librarian. She sees the Library/Media Center as an integral part of her students' day. The environment is quiet, has computers for use by everyone, and is a place used by all students in the school to work on individual projects. Wendy uses this space as a resource area, instead of having the students come to her non-inclusive classroom. Through ongoing interactions, Wendy and the librarian have reached an understanding about accommodating students with disabilities in the Media Center.

The bell rings, marking the start of first lunch. Many of the students on Wendy's caseload are in this lunch period, so she moves quickly to the cafeteria. She and the paraprofessionals assist students with ordering lunch, managing their lunch items, conversing with peers, and continuing to eat so they finish on time. After the students are situated, Wendy gets something to eat and goes to the staff lunchroom. There she talks briefly with the librarian and then with the Social Studies teacher. She notices a special educator who has distanced himself from the other teachers. Wendy views this teacher as more and more disengaged but also knows of his talents in supporting students with challenging behavior. She asks if he would observe her working with a student who recently has been acting out. Wendy shares that she has an observation form with questions to guide recording by an observer and would appreciate him serving as observer and offering feedback. He agrees and plans to show up for part of the class tomorrow.

Wendy returns to her classroom to find she has 4 messages. One is from the physical therapist that serves many of her students. Two are from parents of students, with concerns about their kids. The last call Wendy returns immediately, to a parent that would like to have an emergency IEP meeting later this week. In the conversation she

learned that the student is having difficulties at home and the parent is worried about adverse effects at school.

The bell rings, and third period begins. Wendy goes to a math class in which two students with disabilities are included. The Math teacher teaches while Wendy provides direct support to the two students. Wendy and this math teacher have been meeting once a week during prep time to plan for the curriculum and make appropriate adaptations for the students. Wendy has begun asking reflective questions during these planning meetings to initiate dialogue with the teacher about how the curriculum could be more accessible for some of the other students within the class that are not having great success.

Fourth period block begins, which is Wendy's prep period. She uses this time to communicate, provide hands-on direction, and answer questions. She also uses this time to team with her special education colleagues. She realizes a strong special education team is the backbone for an effective inclusive program. They must work together and support one another, each of them serving as ambassadors for the students and for inclusive learning. Over the years, there have been difficult interactions as not everyone shared the vision of inclusion. Regular meetings were scheduled allowing extended dialogue about what inclusive learning could look like and how to collaborate in achieving this goal. The principal even provided substitute teachers and professional learning time for the special education team to engage in program design and development. While much of the controversy is long over, the team continues to meet regularly during prep time.

Today during this prep time Wendy decides to go to the office, hoping to speak with the principal. She has been trying to find time to talk with him about an emerging initiative from central office to work with paraprofessionals across all the district's junior high schools focusing on support of students in general education. Wendy has been asked to assume a lead role in planning and implementation of this project, at Harrison and district-wide. Wendy finds the principal and tells him about the project and her potential role. He recalls hearing about it in a principals' meeting and is pleased she will be involved. Later, Wendy and the principal arrange to schedule a substitute for two days, allowing Wendy one day to meet special educators from across the district to launch this initiative.

After school, Wendy oversees students in transition to the busses, visits briefly with two teachers as they pass in the hall, and then goes back to her room before an afternoon faculty meeting. She works on adaptations for three of her students then goes to the faculty meeting. After the meeting she decides to wait until after tonight to return parent phone calls and to prepare for the emergency IEP meeting that was scheduled for later this week. Tomorrow is another day, so she gathers up her materials, shuts off the light, passes by Karen's room to say good-bye, then heads for her car to drive home.

## **Teacher Leader Case 2**

### **Allison: Elementary Teacher of English Language Learners**

Burlington Elementary is an urban school with about 600 students and 75 staff members. Allison is one of the 48 licensed faculty members and has been a teacher of English language learners (ELL) at Burlington for nine years. Students are largely from the surrounding neighborhood, populated by Hmong families, but some students come from throughout the city as well. About two thirds of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch and half are students whose first language is not English. In the past few years, district office personnel and Burlington's principal have been encouraging staff to work more collaboratively, especially in the primary grades. Instructional teams have formed that include general educators, ELL teachers, special educators, and other categorically identified teachers and paraprofessionals. The explicit purpose is to create more inclusive and coherent learning experience for all the students.

Allison is the full-time ELL teacher assigned to support the 75 students in second grade. She also directs the work of one educational assistant (EA) whose main focus is instructional support for ELL students. In the past, Allison served students across all grade levels and worked with them in separate resource setting. With the collaboration initiative, ELL and special education teachers have been assigned to as few grade levels as possible so they could get to know the teachers, the curriculum, and the students. This knowledge was viewed as essential if instructional collaboration was to be successful. Initially Allison felt anxious about this substantial change in service provision and role expectation. Now that she is familiar with her new team members and with the second grade curriculum and expectations, she is very excited about this model and sees many opportunities for enhancing the learning of ELL students. She and the other second grade team members collaboratively plan, deliver, and reflect on their shared instructional practice. The team has witnessed significant growth for all the students and remains committed to continuous improvement of their inclusive and collaborative practices.

Since the collaboration initiative began, Allison come to reframe her teaching role as making learning accessible and successful in general education settings for students who are not native English speakers. To do this she works with her grade level team members to intentionally embed three instructional approaches: (1) making sure concepts are presented in an accessible way (referred to as "comprehensible input"), (2) using culture as a foundation and strength for learning, and (3) employing regular opportunities for students to learn collaboratively. Specific strategies include pre-teaching concepts and vocabulary, sometimes in students' first language; strategically selecting vocabulary and engaging students in hands-on activities or physical movement related to the vocabulary; linking prior experience with new learning; and using culturally relevant context and content as the focus of projects. These strategies are effective for many students but are essential to support the learning of children whose languages and cultures differ from dominant culture in the United States and its schools.

Collaborative learning is motivating for many students, including English language learners. It offers many opportunities for language exchange, definition of problems, and brainstorming ideas with peers. Students talk to English and non-English speaking peers to figure out the social nuances of school, creating a cultural understanding of the school itself and how to manage therein. Well designed collaborative learning includes providing an overview of the task, followed by use of assignment cards that provide a detailed description of the assignment parameters and overall expectations for the student group. Students are expected to come to a joint understanding of the task within their group and to assist one another in developing this understanding. A distinct advantage of collaborative student learning structures is that teachers can provide direct support to each group while circulating among groups.

The initial collaboration focus for Allison and the second grade team was redesigning literacy blocks, a period of 90 minutes dedicated exclusively to literacy instruction, although literacy was an embedded focus throughout the rest of the day as well. The first decision required grade-wide support for scheduling. That was to allocate the ELL teacher and other special services personnel to one classroom at the same time, resulting in three to five staff who could be utilized during literacy. This would allow co-teaching. By co-teaching in the same instructional environment, the teachers could observe and learn from one another. Multiple instructors also allowed for fluid movement between whole class and small group instruction while maintaining a coherent focus. Teaching together created a shared experience from which to reflect on and refine instruction. Planning, therefore, was more informed and accelerated. Without shared experience collaborative planning is impaired. In order to have the personnel resources available for co-teaching each second grade classroom had to identify a different block during the school day. This was not easily done because most prefer literacy blocks in the early morning.

With the blocks scheduled, planning commenced to redesign instruction such that the strategies identified above were an intentional part of the design and that multiple instructors were effectively utilized. One of the biggest changes for the second grade team was shift from individualistic to more collaborative learning experiences for students. This change required restructuring how students were organized and grouped. At the request of the team, Allison talked with the principal about allocating professional learning time to meet formally to learn about redesigning instruction for collaborative learning. The principal allowed the team three half days for this development work. Allison designed these sessions as workshops to engage the entire team in designing collaborative learning structures for students, including strategies for determining student groupings and for embedding the instructional strategies that would effectively include and support the heterogeneous groups of students. After the initial large blocks of professional time for the entire grade level team, Allison worked individually with classroom teams to tailor instruction for the specific students in each class.

Literacy blocks were designed somewhat differently in each classroom, in part determined by how much time was available and specifically when additional instructional personnel were scheduled in a classroom. Allison meets once a week after

school with each classroom teacher to identify the theme and instructional units for the following week. In general, Allison and a classroom teacher take turns leading a whole class lesson, then split the students in to small groups with each instructor leading a different group. Depending on specific tasks, sometimes the groups are heterogeneous, other times they are separated into native and non-native English speaking groups. In Allison's small groups, she often acts out a story or the task to foster greater student understanding. Students are encouraged to relate their experiences around the topic and, at least initially, are more likely to do so in small groups. Also within small student groups, Allison has an opportunity to more specifically assess the levels and types of assistance needed for each student. She pays close attention to the tasks, procedures, and students' engagement. She then follows-up with conversations around the concepts and the students' understanding of them. When Allison meets with classroom teachers she is able to communicate the results of her individual student assessments and share relevant strategies designed to better support individual student learning.

Intentionally designed small group instruction is viewed by the teachers as one of the greatest advantages of their collaborative instructional models. It is important to note, however, that while students are sometimes grouped homogeneously, the focus of instruction is held in common to maintain a shared and coherent experience for students in a class. Small group explicitly extends from whole class instruction. Without such explicit connections to general classroom learning and experiences some students can end up marginalized from mainstream culture.

In one second grade class, the literacy block begins with a whole class activity. On Mondays the story of the week is introduced. The classroom teacher, Allison and the EA intentionally make connections between the new ideas and prior knowledge. They ask prediction questions and read the story aloud in English. Often, the EA has pre-taught key vocabulary and story highlights to students in their first language. This increases the students' abilities to grasp the story meaning when the story is delivered in English. Students are encouraged to ask the EA questions in either language. Students also help interpret for one another. Building general knowledge in this way fosters the confidence and competence of students to participate in whole class discussions.

After the whole class instructional time, students move to leveled groups. The classroom teacher works with the more proficient readers. Allison works with those whose proficiency is lower. Group assignments are flexible, however, and are routinely considered using data from running records, Friday reading series tests, and teacher judgment about pace and which students need more practice on vocabulary or letter sounds, for example. Allison begins her small group with the EA rereading the story of the week in Hmong. Allison then provides follow-up instruction related to the story. Three days a week, the students spend half of the small group time with Allison reading other stories related to the theme of the week and half of the time with the EA reviewing previously taught material. On Friday, the whole class meets for partner reading during which higher and lower proficiency readers are paired.

In another second grade classroom, the classroom teacher introduces the story of the week and new vocabulary to the whole class. On Mondays, after this introduction, the class is divided into two groups, similar to the previous classroom example. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, students cycle in four small groups through stations, each of which is directed by one of four adults— the classroom teacher, the ELL teacher, a special education paraprofessional, and a parent volunteer. Each small group of students works at two stations during each of the three guided reading days. The students spend half of the period with one of the teachers and the other half at a station directed by either the paraprofessional or parent volunteer. On Fridays, just Allison and the classroom teacher are present during the literacy block. Allison works with the ELL students, focusing on vocabulary and linking prior knowledge and concepts. The general education teacher works with the other students, engaging in shared reading and completing literacy activities from the week. Small group instruction is designed so that over the course of two weeks, Allison and the classroom teacher work with every student.

Allison works with each of the second grade teachers in a similar fashion, supporting them during literacy and, as much as possible, math blocks as well. She meets with each teacher individually to reflect on the past week and plan for the coming week. She also attends the grade-level team meetings once a week during a lunch period. Every other week, Allison and other ELL teachers in the school get together to share their experiences and to address common issues. The success at Burlington has caught the attention of the district ELL office. Next year, Allison will be appointed to serve as an ELL lead teacher. Through the lead teacher network, she will have an opportunity to learn from ELL teachers in others schools and to support their work.

One additional dimension of Allison’s work that bears attention is her focus on building strong connections with families of the children at Burlington, especially families of the ELL students. She has arranged a regular monthly meeting with parents and teachers representing every grade level. The purpose of which is to share and learn together. Teachers share what is happening at school and invite family members to offer ideas and suggestions for how to enrich learning experiences at school for their children and how to foster effective channels of communication between teachers and parents. Family members foster greater understanding by teachers of Hmong culture, language, and vocabulary. This group has grown to serve as a school-wide family liaison group for hard-to-reach families and serves as a professional development opportunity for the teachers.

The teachers at Burlington have become cognizant of increasing trust and respect among teachers in the building and also of an increasing sense of professionalism. Working collaboratively promotes growth but also involves risk and conflict. What was once private instructional practice is now shared and public. What was once individual decision-making is now collective and, sometimes, controversial. The teachers have necessarily learned to engage professionally around conflict and they are also constantly working on their relationships as a way to bring forth the collective wisdom of teachers in the school to advance instructional practices the result in higher levels of student learning for all the students at Burlington. Allison is committed to her new and evolving role as a

collaborative team member focused on increasing teacher capacity for language instruction and student capacity for language acquisition. When asked whether she would ever go back to the old way, Allison responds, *“It makes the day so much fun! It is a good feeling to know that all kids, no matter what their learning needs, are being taught well.”*

### **Teacher Leader Case 3** **Joe: High School Special Education Teacher**

Joe is a veteran teacher at West High School, an urban school serving about 2000 students within a seven period day structure. He has been at West for more than 25 years with the job title, special educator. With a steady turnover of principals (6 in the past 10 years, for example), Joe and a core group of veteran teachers have learned they have only themselves upon which to depend in terms of program continuity and sustained leadership at the high school. Over the years Joe, often with a special education colleague, Katie, has taken on numerous formal and informal teacher leadership roles. He sees a big picture of how things can work better for students and for staff. He knows that as a special educator, the access and support realized by students with special education and other unique needs, depends on the quality of his relationships with teachers throughout the school. He views each relationship is a resource for learning and for supporting students. Collectively the network of relationships can be leveraged for school-wide improvement.

At the core of Joe's practice is a commitment to encourage and support high school students, especially those with unique learning needs, to (1) understand their strengths as learners and as people, (2) recognize and accommodate for their challenges, (3) be responsible in their communication and decisions with peers and teachers, and (4) envision themselves as productive participants in adult life. Also driving Joe's practice is an explicit focus on building capacity for effectiveness within students, paraprofessionals, other teachers, and always, within himself. Following is a description of primary emphases in Joe's professional practice at West. These descriptions demonstrate how he works to achieve his professional purpose and how he is able to do so much, in part, because of strong partnerships and collegial relationships.

*Continuous learning about effective instruction.* Early in Joe's career as a special educator he got connected with a national cadre of special educators involved with a research project focused on developing instructional strategies for students with mild disabilities. Explicit in the project design was field-based testing of strategies to be sure they could be reasonably implemented in regular contexts of practice: real schools, real teachers, and real students. Also intended was that the strategies could be used in general education, as well as special education classes, and would be beneficial to all students not just those with individual learning challenges. For students with learning disabilities, however, the strategies could mean the difference between surviving and even thriving in a regular class, as opposed to becoming discouraged, losing hope, and failing. Every summer, Joe and eventually, Katie, attended the annual institute, learning new strategies and honoring commitments of the network to follow-up by using the strategies and reporting back on their effectiveness. After several years, Joe and Katie became trainers within this network and conducted workshops within and outside their school and district. Their continually expanding knowledge and practice of effective learning strategies has established their credibility as competent and student-focused educators, within and outside their school and district.

*Co-teaching in selected academic classes.* Another way in which Joe has directly supported students with unique learning needs and increased the capacity of other teachers to do so is through co-teaching in classes, usually core academic classes. Each trimester Joe, Katie and several other special education colleagues at West identify classes in which students with special learning needs will be included. They ask to co-teach in these classes as a way to learn more about the classes, to develop relationships with the teachers, and to embed effective instructional strategies to support students. Strategies targeted for instruction vary but typically including strategies for reading text, summarizing material, organizing assignments, and studying for tests. Over the years, an expectation has been established that special education teachers are likely to request an opportunity to co-teach in subject area classes. Largely positive experiences have made it less difficult to gain access. Often the subject area teachers are grateful for the assistance, teaming, and learning.

*Support class.* About 10 years ago, Joe and Katie, instituted a *Support Class* structure at West High School, recognizing that academic, social, and personal success must include students being personally responsible for their lives and their learning. In this class, students learn strategies that increase their capacity for effective learning, decision-making and problem-solving. Joe and Katie stress communication, self-advocacy, organization, and specific thinking and learning strategies. They have developed organizational tools to support student learning, such as calendar planners, written letters to general education teachers describing their strengths and needs, and progress monitoring forms, all of which students are taught and expected to use. Joe and Katie teach students specific skills for leading their own IEP meetings, reading textbooks, summarizing material, organizing assignments and a plan for completing them, conducting research for course papers, studying for tests and communicating effectively with adults and peers in different situations. Students are also coached to envision a desirable future and to planfully make choices and chart a path to reach their goals.

Current subject area class requirements serve as the content around which strategies and skills are selected and taught. Students bring specific course assignments to support class. Joe and Katie intentionally refer students to a menu of specific strategies that have been taught which support academic success. They pose questions to assist students in selecting an appropriate strategies to support successful engagement with course requirements. The teachers then oversee students' use of the strategies. The teachers continually use questions to prompt student thinking about how to proceed and how to evaluate the quality of their work.

Support Class is available during every period of the school day and can be accessed by any student in the school. Joe and Katie team teach two periods of support classes, each attended by about 20 students, most of whom have learning disabilities. Co-teaching these classes provides the flexibility that is sometimes required for Joe or Katie to be present in a general education class or to respond to various student or staffing issues. Support Class is required for ninth graders with identified special education needs. After ninth grade, support class is voluntary. Many continue to schedule this class throughout their high school experience.

Undergirding teacher-student interactions in support class is a belief that students can and must assume responsibility for their choices— big and small, and that students can and must employ effective means of reflection and thinking to guide their actions and behavior. Joe and Katie employ a “tough love” approach to working with adolescents, who soon will be out in the real world without the kind of safety net offered by West staff.

*Paraprofessional development.* About 30 students with physical disabilities attend West High School. Involved in their support are three special education teachers, one of whom is Joe, and nine paraprofessionals. As with nondisabled students, these student take a wide variety of classes located throughout the school. This increases the need for paraprofessionals to be highly skilled and able to think well on their feet. Joe has taken the lead in teaching paraprofessionals to be reflective in their work with students. His aim is to increase their knowledge and skills for reflective practice and to support a culture in which questioning and collaborative learning among members of the special education team, including the paraprofessionals, is fostered.

Joe meets with the paraprofessionals individually, in small groups, and in whole group formats. Individual meetings are largely focused on support strategies for individual students. Small group meetings with paraprofessionals provide a forum in which to discuss general instructional and support issues. One strategy he uses to foster reflection and learning is called, “Kid of the Day”, during which specific issues, ideas, or concerns are raised by a paraprofessional and reflected on by the entire group (being mindful of confidentiality). The level of trust within the small groups has grown so that the paraprofessionals talk openly with one another without feeling defensive about their experiences and skills. Joe reinforces the ambiguity and unpredictability of some the issues that arise and that teachers, as well, are sometimes stumped. When Joe meets with the entire group of paraprofessionals, about once a month, the agenda includes general programmatic issues and changes (such as changes incurred when trimesters change) and general development targets, such as learning strategies to use with students and furthering reflective capacities.

*TGI-Reading Fridays.* Several years ago the focus on reading intensified at West when passing the state’s basic standards test became a graduation requirement. At that time, however, many teachers believed that reading was a special education issue, not a school-wide issue. Joe and several colleagues asserted that student success in reading was not *owned* by one department and, that if such a view persisted, the school would not be successful reaching its reading goals for students. Reading was reframed as a school-wide, instead of a special education, issue. The special education team created a three year plan that would involve all teachers in an intensive reading instruction program focused on embedding literacy strategies in all subject area classes.

During the first summer, an intensive reading program was offered for the teacher by a local education cooperative. Ongoing follow-up took the form of voluntary biweekly participation in a Friday morning reading reflection group, *TGI-Reading Fridays*,

facilitated by Joe and Katie. Staff members who attended the summer training, as well as those who did not, were invited to participate in the group. Between 15 and 20 teachers from a variety of subject areas regularly attended. Each session focused on participant-identified reading related topics or issues. Teachers were encouraged to share lessons to foster learning from one another. The diverse participant backgrounds sparked broad application and rich learning for everyone.

Joe and Katie intentionally designed the sessions to foster learning and relationships. They made it fun and participants took turns bringing food. They modeled reflection and inquiry about the topics and issues raised. Each session began with a short reading-related activity that often featured other teachers. A math teacher, for example, offered a short lesson on Latin roots and how he applied this information in his classes. This elicited dialogue about how reading instruction might be embedded into subject area curriculum and classes.

New relationships formed among teachers across departments and grade levels because the initiative was a school-wide. Many teachers began embedding reading strategies into their subject area instructional practices given increased knowledge, idea sharing, and supported use of reading strategies.

*Staff Development and Mentoring.* When West High began experiencing a regular loss of career educators to retirement, the need arose to plan for and support new teachers joining the faculty every year. Joe and Katie, knowing that their time at West would also be coming to end within a few years (Joe to retirement, Katie to a principalship), volunteered to co-chair the site staff development committee, putting primary focus on induction and mentoring of new teachers. They also recruited relatively new and mid-career teachers to work closely with them in designing the new teacher support program for West. This core group then recruited teachers from throughout the building so that each new teacher had a subject area and general site mentor teacher. In addition, the committee recommended and eventually was supported in granting each new teacher an extra “prep” period during the school day for the first trimester. During this period they could observe other teachers, meet with their mentors, and get themselves organized for the remaining periods of the day. Site allocated staff development funds were used to train mentors in coaching strategies. And, monthly meetings were tailored to meet the identified interests and needs of the new teachers. Because the West induction program was so carefully designed, their new teachers were exempted from district-wide new teacher support requirements.

Joe’s week is varied and full. He spends time in direct service to students and in learning and development work with paraprofessionals and teachers. Joe epitomizes the learning educator. He is driven to learn and contribute. He is energetic and positive in his work. He likes people and people are attracted to him. Although he does not view his work as leadership in a formal sense, it is, indeed, leadership of a very powerful sort. Joe influences others by modeling effective instructional, collegial, and development practices. He intentionally builds relationships with students and colleagues, recognizing that trusting and respectful relationships are the means by which strong systems of

support for student learning can be realized. His professional partnership with Katie, along with other colleagues in the strong and respected special services department at West, are a key part of being able to develop and sustain the many dimensions of his practice and of their collective practice. With strong partnerships, there is ongoing reflection and sharing of responsibilities, which makes expanded influence and continuous development possible in a school.

Attachment 4 - Activity 1: Lists of Possible Responses to Case Study Reflection Questions

**Case 1 – Wendy: Jr. High Special Educator**

**Student Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practice did you identify at the student (instructional) level?*

- provides instruction directly to students in a variety of school and classroom locations
- regularly visits classes where students are included to assess and monitor performance, including trying out instructional strategies or accommodations with students
- accommodates changing student needs daily, by revising the schedule, for example
- works directly with students, as paraprofessionals observe, to model effective practices
- intentionally aligns learning opportunities in general education classes with individual student abilities and interests by considering current performance and individual learning objectives and then identifying when and where objectives will be specifically addressed across the school day and week

**Collegial Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practice did you identify at the collegial level?*

- closely works with various colleagues to meet the needs of students, including special and general educators, paraprofessionals, library support personnel as well as itinerant support teachers
- continually communicates, formally and informally, with teachers who have students on her caseload in their classes
- invites other teachers to participate in problem-solving student issues
- co-teaches in regular subject area classes, modeling dispositions and skills that support students with disabilities (as well as other students) who are in the co-taught classes
- collaboratively plans for co-taught class instruction
- maintains and communicates a strong vision of inclusion, with a focus on building relationships and capacities with teacher colleagues to support realization of the vision
- supports families and communicates regularly with parents and guardians

**School Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practice did you identify at the school level?*

- through teaming and building relationships with colleagues, has become familiar with various subject area curriculums and offers insight and experiences to support effective learning for all students
- enhances family and community connections through her communication and belief of their value
- deliberately nurtures partnerships with other people, constantly communicating her vision and values, and responding positively to others' concerns – which fosters the development and maintenance of a collaborative school culture
- works with the principal to secure professional learning and program development opportunities for her team
- engages other teachers in reflective practices and professional development
- assumes formal lead role at school as well as district-level for paraprofessional training initiative

## Case 2 – Allison: Elementary Teacher of English Language Learners

**Student Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practices did you identify at the student (instructional) level?*

- has reframed her teaching role as making learning accessible and successful in general education settings for students who are not native English speakers
- works directly with students to assess, to teach, and to model effective practices for others
- collaboratively delivers then reflects on shared instructional practice in co-taught blocks
- provides instruction, emphasizing “comprehensible input” and cultural alignment
- pre-teaches targeted vocabulary in small groups
- models facilitating collaborative and inclusive student learning practices
- structures lessons that invite and support student-to-student peer coaching
- addresses family and cultural background as learning strengths

**Collegial Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practices did you identify at the collegial level?*

- intentional redesign of literacy blocks, including grade-wide scheduling changes
- co-teaching as a means of observing and learning from one another
- establishing collaborative partnerships and teaching which allowed reflection and dialogue about instruction; including accelerated and informed planning
- advocates for professional learning time for teacher teams to redesign learning and teaching
- shares her expertise, formally and informally, with other teachers about strategies that foster understanding, learning, and active classroom participation by ELL students
- organizes paraprofessional supports and parent volunteers as needed, based on student needs and strengths
- demonstrates flexibility in working with a wide variety of teachers
- conflict and risk taking are seen as the norm, and are dealt with in positive ways, with a focus on increasing trust and respect

**School Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practices did you identify at the school level?*

- develops and maintains family–teacher gatherings on a monthly basis to foster conversations for mutual sharing, learning, and relationship building
- leads bi-weekly professional learning meetings for all ELL teachers in the building
- maintains a vision for *all* students of increased literacy and success in school
- serves informally as an advocate of collaborative and inclusive practices thereby facilitating a sense of connection and community throughout the building
- will serve next year as the district-wide lead teacher, representing Burlington and providing an opportunity to both share and learn with other site lead teachers from throughout the district

## Case 3 – Joe: High School Special Education Teacher

**Student Level Practices:** *What examples of teacher leadership practice did you identify at the*

***student (instructional) level?***

- realizes the quality of education for students with unique learning needs depends on the quality and quantity of relationships he establishes with other teachers and support people
- encourages students to (1) understand their strengths as learners and as people, (2) recognize and accommodate for their challenges, (3) be responsible in their communication and decisions with peers and teachers, and (4) envision themselves as productive participants in adult life
- focuses on building student capacities for personal effectiveness, now and in the future, by teaching communication, self-advocacy, responsibility, and making choices
- teaches students specific learning strategies to foster their academic success, such as reading text, summarizing material, organizing assignments, and studying for tests
- seeks out and develops co-teaching relationships within the special services department and with teachers in regular subject area classes to advance instructional practices
- continually seeks to develop his own teaching and instructional skills

***Collegial Level Practices: What examples of teacher leadership practices did you identify at the collegial level?***

- co-teaches core academic classes as an opportunity to learn more about the classes, develop relationships with teachers and embed effective instructional strategies
- models and expects special educators and general educators to co-teach classes
- co-designs and teachers *support class* to model collaborative practices for students, to foster learning between the co-teachers, and to allow flexibility required to sometimes slip away to observe students in the context of regular subject area classes
- coaches and develops paraprofessionals in an inclusive, respectful and reflective manner
- exudes energy, models questioning and reflection, and is positive in his work—modeling a truly reflective and learning educator
- influences others through instructional, collegial and development practices, stressing the importance of a network of relationships for coherent student learning and support

***School Level Practices: What examples of teacher leadership practices did you identify at the school level?***

- formally engages school, district, and outside-of-district teacher colleagues in learning about effective instructional strategies and practices
- co-leads school-wide literacy initiative that includes the *TGI-Reading Fridays* reflection group that includes a variety of teachers from throughout the building
- explicitly states the need for shared ownership of all students by all teachers; intentionally fosters learning conversations, reflection, and collaboration among teachers throughout the school to develop a culture of learning and working together
- co-chairs the site level new teacher induction and mentoring committee and purposefully invites and includes a wide variety of teachers
- solicits site-wide support for new teachers to be provided with an additional “prep” period for teachers to use to observe other teachers or meet with mentors
- seeks site exemption from district-wide new teacher induction requirements

### Jigsaw Activity Process

1. Form groups of three people. Each member selects one of the three arguments:
  - If the adults are separate, the kids will be separate.
  - Leadership is influence and influence is everywhere.
  - Inclusivity is counter-culture.
2. As a group, respond to the following summary prompts for your piece:
  - The big idea of this argument is...
  - Key supporting points are...
3. Return to your mixed group of three.
  - Round robin share back the “big ideas” and selected supporting points for each of the three arguments.
  - Generate at least two more reasons why teachers must be leaders for inclusive schooling.
4. Whole class.
  - Each group shares their additional reasons.
  - Small groups: Develop “Laser Talk” (see cue on slide X)
  - Share back: Small groups share back “laser talk”

### Jigsaw Piece 1: If the adults are separate the kids will be separate

Relationships are the primary means for creating change in organizations. People, by how they interact, create and re-create the organization and how it works. Connections among the adults in schools create the bridges by which students can access opportunities and resources available in the larger educational community. It is especially critical to understand the influence of adults relationships on student access for students who are at risk for being marginalized in schools, such as students with disabilities, who are economically disadvantaged, and whose first language is not English. If their teachers are separate from the mainstream of educational opportunity, they will be also. Creating inclusive learning environments cannot be done alone. A web of relationships spanning the school must be created and nurtured. Special education and English Language Learner professionals must be spinners of relationship webs that will support students throughout their education experience. In what ways do teacher-to-teacher relationships influence student access and learning?

### **Jigsaw Piece 2: Leadership is influence and influence is everywhere.**

Inclusion, like every other change in practice, does not occur in the absence of strong leadership. Leadership is about influencing others to reflect on current practice, to envision a more desirable future, and to inspire action that results in improvement. Influence happens everywhere, at every level and between all levels in the educational system. Families who desire a more inclusive education for their children influence educators and vice versa. Teachers who demonstrate collaborative ways of solving problems and supporting students influence other teachers in doing so. Principals who articulate a powerful vision for students learning together and who provide professional development opportunities for faculty to realize the vision influence the language, the culture, and the practices of inclusivity and equity in schools. In a social organization, such as schools, each person influences others whether or not they are aware of it. Choices of attitude, language, behavior, and how to direct one's energy contribute enormously to the culture and the conditions of teaching and learning in schools...for better or worse. In what ways do teacher positively influence one another to foster inclusive practices?

### **Jigsaw Piece 3: Inclusivity is Counter Culture**

Despite persistent, courageous, and bold efforts throughout our country's history, inclusivity remains an espoused but unrealized value in our culture. Beyond disability or language, inclusivity is a human value and desire held in common by many individuals, especially those for whom equity in community has always been a struggle. When we ask, "Why is it so hard to create an inclusive school?" The answer comes from understanding that our schools reflect the broader society in which they are embedded. Examples of truly inclusive communities are difficult to find. In schools, then, we are trying to re-create a new culture, one that counters directly our existing culture and one with which we may have little experience. Culture shapes and is shaped by daily routines and interactions among educators. How do teachers influence school culture? What kinds of behaviors, practice, and conversations foster an inclusive culture?

Jigsaw pieces adapted from: York-Barr, J., Vandercook, T. (2003). Lessons learned on the way toward inclusion. *Impact: Feature Issue on Revisiting Inclusive K-12 Education, 16(1)* [online]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Available from <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/161>.