

# Leading an Inclusive School

Access and Success for **ALL** Students

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Letter to the Reader .....	1
Section I .....	5
1. An Inclusive School: Providing Access and Success for All .....	7
<i>Mary A. Falvey and Christine C. Givner with Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand</i>	
2. The Rationales for Creating and Maintaining Inclusive Schools .....	17
<i>Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand</i>	
Voice of Inclusion: From My Friend, Ro Vargo .....	31
<i>Rosalind Vargo with Joe Vargo</i>	
Section II .....	43
3. The Foundation: Administrative Leadership and Support in Managing Complex Change .....	47
<i>Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand</i>	
4. Collaborative Planning and Problem Solving .....	71
<i>Jacqueline S. Thousand and Richard A. Villa</i>	
5. Maximizing Resources and Designing Interventions Through a Multitiered System of Supports .....	94
<i>Jacqueline S. Thousand and Richard A. Villa</i>	
6. Co-Teaching to Promote Student Access and Success.....	105
<i>Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand</i>	
7. Differentiated Instruction: Access to the General Education Curriculum for All.....	117
<i>Jacqueline S. Thousand, Alice Udvari-Solner, and Richard A. Villa</i>	

8. Access and Success for All: What Can One Person Do? .....	144
<i>Jacqueline S. Thousand and Richard A. Villa</i>	
Voice of Inclusion: The Principal's Role in Creating and Sustaining Inclusive Education.....	148
<i>Yazmin Pineda Zapata</i>	
Section III .....	159
9. Questions, Concerns, Beliefs, and Practical Advice about Inclusive Education .....	161
<i>Richard A. Villa, Jacqueline S. Thousand, Emma Van der Klift, John Udis, Ann I. Nevin, Norman Kunc, Paula Kluth, and James Chapple</i>	
Voice of Inclusion: Everything About Bob Was Cool, Including His Cookies.....	177
<i>Richard A. Villa</i>	
Index.....	189
About the Editors and Contributors.....	197

## CHAPTER 1

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# An Inclusive School: Providing Access and Success for All

*Mary A. Falvey and Christine C. Givner with Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand*

*There is only one child in the world and the child's name is ALL children.*

— Carl Sandburg

### **An Inclusive Classroom in Action**

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What does an inclusive school look and sound like? The following scenario describes a freshman language arts class on a typical day in the life of 32 students attending an ordinary yet extraordinary high school in a large urban school district.

It is 3rd period in Mr. Rice's freshman English language arts class, and the 32 students have just finished "reading" the final chapter of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960). Students have listened to the book using text-to-speech software, read versions of it written at lower readability levels, or read it in both English and their native language to accommodate their limited English literacy levels. All the students have either created or been given graphic organizers to help them organize key ideas. The students have been working on the California English Language Arts standards while reading the book. Although the students have diverse learning styles and abilities, all are challenged in meaningful ways that relate to the state standards. Mr. Rice has just assigned a culminating task for partners to creatively depict how the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* demonstrate

the usual teacher pace, or the usual tests. The challenge of schooling remains what it has been since the modern era began two centuries ago: ensuring that *all* students receive their entitlement. They have the *right* to thought-provoking and enabling schoolwork, so that they might use their minds well and discover the joy therein to willingly push themselves farther. They have the *right* to instruction that obligates the teacher, like the doctor, to change tactics when progress fails to occur. They have the *right* to assessment that provides students and teachers with insight into real-world standards, useable feedback, the opportunity to self-assess, and the chance to have dialogue with, or even to challenge, the assessor—also a *right* in a democratic culture. Until such a time, we will have no insight into human potential. Until the challenge is met, schools will continue to reward the lucky or the already equipped and weed out the poor performers. (pp. xv–xvi)

### **Inclusive Education and School Restructuring**

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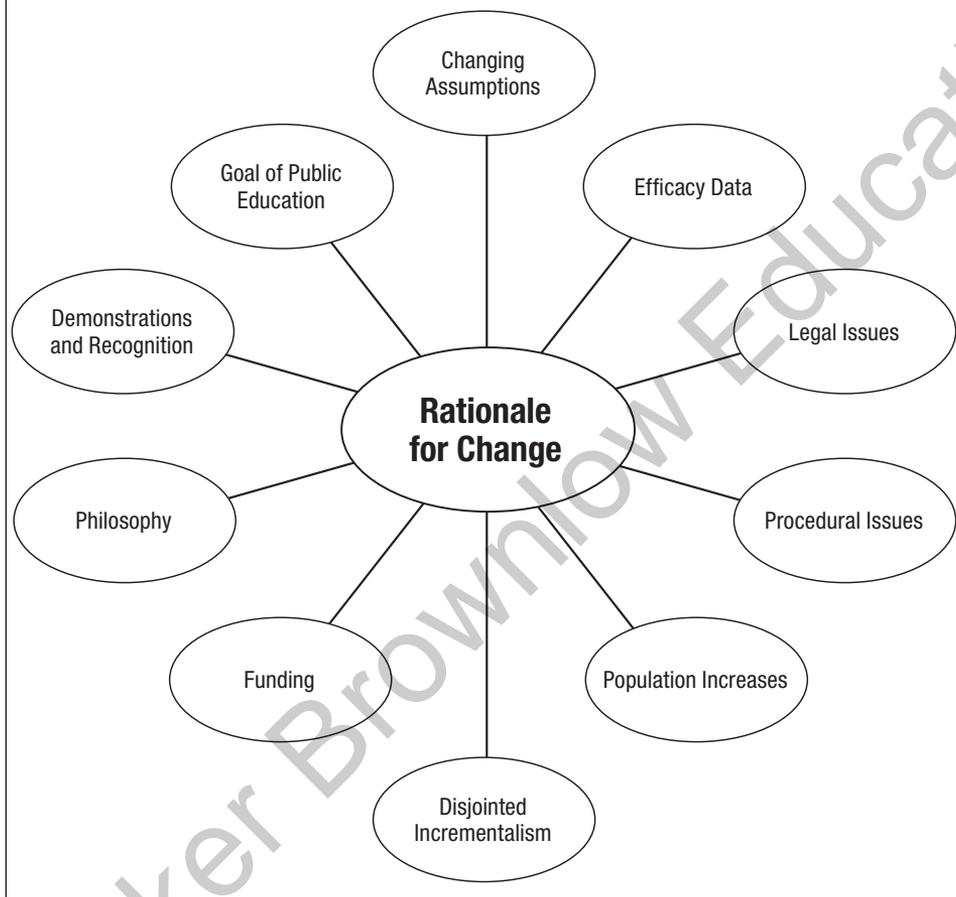
The call for restructuring the education system so that it offers high and meaningful educational standards, equitable learning opportunities for every student, and accountability from educators requires individual and collective commitment and hard work. At a minimum, any school restructuring effort requires educators to hold the following beliefs:

- Each student has strengths and needs.
- Each student can and will learn and succeed.
- Each student has unique contributions to offer other learners.
- Diversity enriches us all.
- Students can overcome risks of failure through involvement in a thoughtful and caring community of educators and learners.
- Effective learning results from the collaborative efforts of everyone working to ensure each student's success.
- Supports and services need to “fit” the student (i.e., they must be comprehensive, flexible, and personalized) rather than the student needing to “fit into” existing services.

Restructuring efforts in special education have parallel efforts in general education, as they intentionally raise fundamental questions regarding

FIGURE 2.3

**Rationales for Change**



2. Which of the rationales do you think your colleagues, supervisors, students, community members, and policymakers find most compelling?

Your answers to these two questions are an important step in discerning both how beliefs and attitudes *influence* the creation of inclusive schools and how they *can be influenced* by a variety of rationales.

**References**

Baker, E., Wang, M., & Walberg, H. (1994). The effects of inclusion on learning. *Educational Leadership*, 52(4), 33–35.

## From My Friend, Ro Vargo

*Rosalind Vargo with Joe Vargo*

*A school should not be a preparation for life. A school should be life.*  
— Elbert Hubbard

It was Tuesday, a beautiful autumn morning on the campus of Syracuse University. Ro had just finished her class “Topics in American Music—20th Century” in Bowne Hall and was walking back to the car (with my assistance) to go home. Joe, Ro’s dad, was waiting in the car. He and I looked at each other and at Ro and wondered how we had gotten here. After all, it seemed like only yesterday....

### **Kindergarten**

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Among our vivid memories of Kindergarten is that of Ro’s first invitation to a birthday party. Kristen’s mother phoned to ask if she should make any special arrangements for Ro to attend. Fighting back tears, we responded, “No, but thanks for asking.” Kristen’s mom said her daughter was so looking forward to Ro coming. Then we said it: “We love Ro because she’s our daughter. But do you know why other kids like her?”

“She says she likes Ro’s smile,” said Kristen’s mom, “and that she’s someone you can really talk to, and that she wears really neat clothes. I think kids like Ro because she isn’t a threat to them; they can just be themselves around her.”

# Maximizing Resources and Designing Interventions Through a Multitiered System of Supports

*Jacqueline S. Thousand and Richard A. Villa*

The second floor of the Schoolhouse Model (Figure II.1, p. 45) is shared by two processes intended to increase the likelihood that curriculum differentiation is successful: the Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS) and co-teaching. We will discuss co-teaching at length in Chapter 6; here, our focus is on the MTSS.

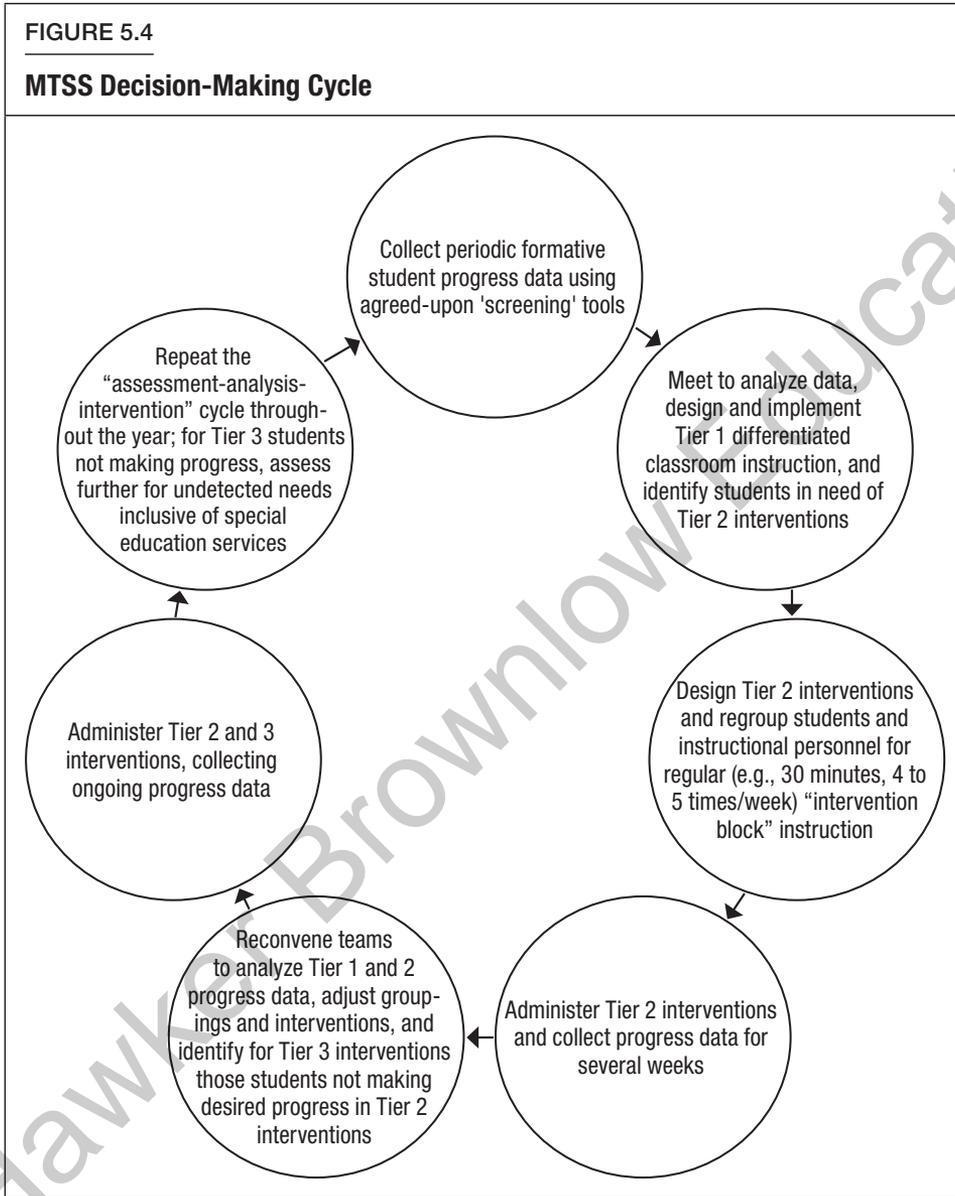
First introduced with the reauthorization of IDEIA in 2004, the MTSS is meant to prevent unnecessary special education referrals through research-based instruction in general education and swift and targeted interventions for struggling students. Originally known as Response to Intervention (or RTI), the MTSS is divided into three distinct tiers:

- Tier 1. High-quality, evidence-based core instruction in general education with frequent student progress monitoring
- Tier 2. Supplemental targeted interventions, generally delivered in small groups to students who aren't meeting expected curriculum benchmarks
- Tier 3. More intensive and individualized interventions for students who do not respond adequately to Tier 1 and 2 interventions (Villa & Thousand, 2011).

The IDEIA regulations allow for the use of an RTI process “based on a child’s response to scientific research-based intervention, as a component to determine whether a child has an SLD [Specific Learning Disability]”

FIGURE 5.4

**MTSS Decision-Making Cycle**



collaborative strategies and creative problem-solving processes discussed in Chapter 4 can be used at each stage of the cycle; for example, teams might use the structured agenda format shown in Figure 4.2 (p. 80) to better meet goals, make meetings more effective, and communicate more clearly with other team members.

James? Yes or no?”). As a result, Rebecca’s team constructed a Yes/No response board and created a range of literacy experiences that were spin-offs of the initial note-passing experience (Kliwer & Biklen, 2001).

### **What is a child with severe disabilities going to do in a 9th grade science course?**

This question really is asking why a student who has very different objectives from the majority of class members would be included in an activity or class that does not, at first glance, seem to meet his or her needs. Sometimes people don’t realize just how rich a general education environment is, particularly for students with more pervasive and intense support needs. The variety of people, materials, and activities is endless and provides an ongoing flow of opportunities for communication and relationship building, incidental learning in areas not yet targeted as priority objectives, and direct instruction in a student’s high-priority learning areas.

Creative thinking on the part of the student’s support team is key to a student’s meaningful participation in a general education environment. Teams always have at least four options:

1. Have the student do the *same* as everyone else (e.g., practice songs in music class);
2. Pursue *multilevel curriculum and instruction*, in which all students are working from the same curriculum but pursuing varied objectives at multiple levels according to their unique needs;
3. Employ *curriculum overlapping*, whereby students work on the same lesson but pursue objectives from different curricular areas (see the Voice of Inclusion following this chapter for examples); and
4. Offer *alternative activities* to allow for priority community or employment experiences, management needs (e.g., catheterization in the nurse’s office), or when a general education activity cannot be adapted (e.g., mandatory statewide high-stakes testing).

We advise extreme caution when ruling an activity impossible to adapt or the general education classroom inappropriate for a student with intensive support needs. We have learned through experience that general