Exceptional Teachers Teaching Exceptional Children

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Special Education Legal Alert

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This month's update identifies two recent court decisions addressing various FAPE issues, including the "assess all areas" obligation, and, in the second case, the overlay of Section 504/ADA. For related publications and earlier monthly updates, see **perryzirkel.com**.

On July 29, 2022, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an officially unpublished decision in *Minnetonka Public Schools v. M.L.K.,* addressing the issue of assessing "all areas of suspected disability." In the initial evaluation after an unsuccessful year in kindergarten, the district determined that the child was eligible under the classification of autism. The resulting IEPs for a repetition of kindergarten and then for grades 1, 2, and 3 provided for specialized instruction in reading, writing, and math. Based on the child's slow progress in reading, including attention, these successive IEPs increased the 1:1 support in reading and, in grade 3, added small group instruction in the Wilson Reading System. Dissatisfied, the parents filed for a due process hearing at the end of grade 3. The parents also requested an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense, which the district provided and which formally diagnosed the child with dyslexia and ADHD in addition to autism. In response, the district only revised the IEP to add a secondary classification of speech/language impairment. After conducting the hearing, the hearing officer decided that the district denied FAPE to the child for the entire period, including failure to assess the child in all areas of suspected disability. Interpreting the IDEA's statute of limitations as applying to 2+2 years, the hearing officer awarded 4 years of compensatory education. Upon the school district's appeal, the federal district court in Minnesota upheld the

denial of FAPE based on the failures to identify dyslexia and ADHD and to design an IEP to address the child's resulting needs in reading. However, the court interpreted the statute of limitations to restrict the compensatory education award to 2 years. Both parties filed an appeal with the Eighth Circuit.

First, the Eighth Circuit ruled that the failure to add the diagnoses of dyslexia and ADHD was not a violation of the IDEA.	The appellate court concluded that the school district fulfilled its obligations to assess all areas of suspected disability "including his specific struggles with reading and attention."
Alternatively, Eighth Circuit concluded that even if the school district misclassified the disability, the child was not denied FAPE because the IEP met the *Endrew F.* standard.	"While we acknowledge that the IEP goals were largely the same for [the two years], the overall trend shows that the School District set achievable, measurable goals that, when combined with consistently increasing special education services, were reasonably calculated to allow [the child] to make appropriate progress."
The Eighth Circuit did not directly address the issue of the IDEA's statute of limitations.	Although indirectly focusing on the last two years, the court referred more generally to the district's IEPs during the entire K–3 period in finding no denial of FAPE.
This decision illustrates the difficulty of applying the IDEA's "all areas" evaluation requirement. The majority approach, which the appellate court chose, is to focus on the substance of the IEP under *Endrew F.* rather than on the diagnostic labels within the classifications of the IDEA. However, as the hearing officer and	

lower court decisions in this case show, this particular language is subject to more than one interpretation, depending on the particular circumstances of the case, including the judge and the jurisdiction.

On August 9, 2022, the First Circuit Court of Appeals issued an officially published decision in *Falmouth School Department v. Doe*, addressing various issues relating to the parents' unilateral placement of a child with dyslexia and ADHD. After the child attended a private preschool and kindergarten, the parents enrolled him in the school district for grade 1 (2016–2017). Based on pre-k literacy skills, the district conducted an evaluation, found the child eligible under the IDEA, and provided an IEP that started at mid-year and that provided specially designed instruction in reading, writing, and math. For reading, the special education teacher chose the "SPIRE" program. The next annual IEP, which was in January 2018, increased the reading instruction from 30 minutes to 60 minutes per day based on the child's difficulties with orthographic and phonological processing. The special education teacher continued using SPIRE, finding that the child took longer to complete its first level than any other student she could recall. At the start of grade 3 (2018–2019), in response to the parents' concern with the child's lack of progress in reading, the IEP team only added audio books to the IEP. Agreeing with the parents' concern, the new special education teacher tried the Wilson "Foundation" program but switched back to SPIRE. In December 2018, the parents obtained a private reading evaluation from a local private special education school. The evaluation found some core reading skills to be at the "pre-k to kindergarten" levels and recommended 1:1 Lindamood Bell "LiPS" and "Seeing Stars" programming. In response to this evaluation, the January 2019 IEP modestly increased the level of special education, including "some instruction using the Lindamood Bell 'Seeing Stars' program." Dissatisfied, the parents arranged for part-time placement at the private school each afternoon for 1:1 LiPS and Seeing Stars instruction. In March 2019, after the school

district agreed to the child's early dismissal for this purpose but with no change to the morning's special education instruction, the parents revoked consent for the IEP and kept the child in the general education classroom for the mornings under a 504 plan for the remainder of grade 3 and the beginning of grade 4. In November 2019, based on the child's slow progress, the parents requested a full-day placement at the private school. Instead, the district proposed an IEP that provided for full-time placement in the district with an increase in specially designed instruction in math, the addition of behavioral interventions, and no Lindamood Bell programming. The parents rejected this IEP, unilaterally placed the child full-time at the private school, and filed for a due process hearing to obtain tuition reimbursement. The hearing officer ruled that the January 2018, January 2019, and November 2019 IEPs did not meet the *Endrew F.* standard and awarded reimbursement for the private school from January 2019 until June 2020. The federal district court in Maine affirmed the FAPE ruling and remedy, but rejected that parents' added claims of retaliation. Both sides appealed.

The First Circuit rejected the district's defense of its use of SPIRE, instead affirming the conclusion that these IEPs were not specially designed to address the child's specific orthographic processing deficit.	The appellate court recognized that school districts are entitled to judicial deference to choose among competing methodologies but observed that the choice must meet the *Endrew F.* standard of being reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress appropriate to the child's circumstances.
The appellate court also rejected the district's challenge to the appropriateness of the unilateral placement, including the IDEA's provision for the least restrictive environment (LRE).	Although using a pre-*Endrew F.* Sixth Circuit standard based on the private placement providing "'some element of the special education services' missing from the public alternative," the court

	relied on precedents ruling that LRE does not disqualify unilateral private placements for tuition reimbursement.
The First Circuit also rejected the parents' retaliation claims under § 504/ADA and the 1st Amendment.	The parents' retaliation claims lacked the requisite showing of causally connected adverse action and, for § 504/ADA, the requisite disability-based intent.
This case illustrates the continuing limited but unpredictable "play" in the analysis of (a) methodology disputes, (b) the tuition reimbursement remedy, and (c) non-IDEA overlays, such as § 504 claims, that offer the potential remedy of money damages.	

Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-sept2022-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-aug2022-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-aug2022-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-july2022-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-june2022-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-2022-may/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-april2022-issue1/

All About My Child

*(Available in Spanish: **Todo sobre mi hijo/a**)*

This resource is designed to help teachers learn more about each child in their classroom. The sheet asks parents to share info about their child (e.g., likes, dislikes, nickname, languages spoken in the home), using a fun, graphic format.

Partnering With Your Child's School

*(Available in Spanish: **Sociarse con la escuela de su hijo**)*

You and the school share responsibility for your child's language and literacy learning. Collaborate with the school to make decisions about your child's literacy education right from the start. Working together promotes faster development and catches trouble spots early.

Scripted Stories for Social Situations

(In multiple languages, including Spanish, Hmong, Ojibwe, & Somali)

These short, adaptable PowerPoint presentations mix words and pictures to communicate specific info to children about social situations such as going to preschool, sitting in circle time, staying safe, and using their words. (From the link, scroll down the page to "Scripted Stories," click the drop-down on the right, and see the many stories there are! It's rather amazing.)

Understood Explains: The Ins and Outs of Evaluations for Special Education

Understood Explains is a podcast that unpacks the process that school districts use to evaluate children for special education services. There are 9 separate podcasts in the series, including parent rights, how to request an evaluation of their child, what to expect during (and after) an evaluation, and private versus school-based evaluations.

Getting Dressed

Getting dressed is a wonderful opportunity for young children to build feelings of independence. It is also a wonderful opportunity to embed STEM learning opportunities, such as sequencing, relational concept, matching, or categorizing.

Help Us Calm Down: Strategies for Children

*(Also available in **Spanish**, **Ojibwe**, **Hmong**, and **Somali**)*

Try these strategies with your child. The more you use a calming strategy and practice it with your child, the more likely he or she is to use the strategy when experiencing anger, stress, sadness, or frustration.

6 Ways to Help When Your Child is Excluded

Parents may feel powerless when their child is excluded, but there's actually much they can do to help their child cope and overcome this painful experience. From Great Schools.

There is Power in Friendship Toolkit

Making friends can be hard, especially for children with disabilities. *Power in Friendship* is designed for families of children with disabilities AND those with typically developing children. It provides resources on how to help your child build inclusive friendships.

How to Help a Disorganized Child

Here's a simple trick that can turn the most scattered kid into a master of organization.

How to Handle School Refusal

*(In Spanish: **Rechazo a la escuela: Cómo ayudar a su hijo a superarlo**)*

When students flat-out refuse to go to school, it can be stressful for both parents and teachers. Different kids resist or refuse school in different ways. Here are tips for parents, caregivers, and educators to manage school refusal, based on what behavior they're seeing (e.g., crying or tantrums, won't get dressed, won't get on the bus or in the car).

A Deeper Look at Anxiety in Kids

This newsletter from the Child Mind Institute consists of separate articles on the subject of anxiety: What are the different kinds of anxiety? How anxiety leads to problem behavior. What is separation anxiety? Selective mutism. Social anxiety. Agoraphobia in children.

13 Bipolar Disorder Symptoms to Be Aware Of

Bipolar disorder, or manic depression, can make it difficult to carry out day-to-day tasks. Here are 13 signs and symptoms to help you know if you or someone you care about should seek treatment.

Video | Supported Decision Making in Health Care and Medical Treatment Decisions

This 8-minute video focuses on helping people with disabilities make decisions about their own health care.

Health and Learning Are Deeply Interconnected in the Body: An Action Guide for Policymakers

As science is showing, the conditions and environments in which children develop affect their lifelong health as well as educational achievement. This guide from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard distills 3 key messages from science that can help guide thinking and policy in a time when innovation has never been more needed in public systems in order to improve both health and learning.

Planning Your Future: A Guide to Transition

The transition to life after high school can be an uncertain time for students with learning disabilities. This guide from NCLD is a tool that students, families, and educators can use to navigate information and prepare for what's next.

Transportation: Knowing the Options

VR professionals know that most job seekers with disabilities would prefer to travel as independently as possible. If owning and driving a vehicle is not an option, what alternatives exist?

Providing Required Compensatory Services That Help Students with Disabilities in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

This webinar, hosted by Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and OSERS, is a great way to learn when a school district must provide compensatory services under Section 504 and the IDEA to students with disabilities who did not receive the services to which they were entitled due to the pandemic. How to do so is also discussed.

Back-to-School: Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs

LDOnline offers 8 back-to-school tips for parents that emphasize communication, organization, and staying up-to-date on special education news.

The Promise and the Potential of the IEP

The Spring-Summer issue of *The Special EDge Newsletter* is full of articles on the IEP, such as:
Strength-based and Student-focused IEPs;
Improving the IEP: The Parent and Family Perspective;
Collaboration and the IEP; and
What I Learned That Can Help Others, written by a youth speaking for those who cannot.

Prepararse para una reunión de IEP

This 7-minute video in Spanish describes how parents can prepare for an upcoming IEP meeting.

Tools for Tough Times

Much has been said and written about the importance of supporting the mental health of students returning to school in such turbulent times. Now youth speak for themselves in 30 two-minute teen-led videos. They show us all what steps they're taking to cope with the isolation, anxiety,

and uncertainty they're feeling. You don't need to be a teen to benefit from the tools they describe.

Adapted PE for Your Child? Dear Parents

Adaptability.com has some information to offer parents on Adapted Physical Education and the rights they have, given that adapted PE is a federally mandated special education service.

An Action-Packed Year for Parent Centers | Here's the infographic CPIR produced with the data you submitted. It's 2 pages (designed to be printed front/back to become a 1-page handout or mini-poster). It's a stunning portrait of what can be achieved by a few, extremely dedicated people for the benefit of so many.

Adaptable Infographic for Parent Centers to Use | This infographic is designed so you can insert just your Center's numbers, data results, and branding into key blocks of information. Adapt the PowerPoint file, and shine the spotlight on the work of your Center!

Quick Guide to Adapting the Infographic | This 2-page guide shows you where to insert your Center-specific information, just in case having such a "checklist" would be helpful.

PTAs Leading the Way in Transformative Family Engagement
*(Also available in Spanish: **Las PTA lideran el camino en la participación familiar transformadora**)*
Drawing from research findings and best practices for family-school partnerships, this 11-page resource explains the guiding principles of the 4 I's of transformative family engagement (inclusive, individualized, integrated, impactful) and shares strategies local PTAs can use as a model to implement these principles in their school community.

Summer and Sensory Processing Issues
*(Also available in Spanish: **El verano y los problemas de procesamiento sensorial**) |* Why can summer be a difficult time for kids with sensory processing issues? What can parents do to help kids stay comfortable in overstimulating outdoor activities?

Ideas to Engage Students with Significant Multiple Disabilities in Activities During the Summer Holidays

Here are fun ideas for summer activities for children with significant multiple disabilities and visual impairment, including sensory trays, art activities, books, music, and toys.

Two more, with titles speakin for themselves?

Babies and Toddlers Indeed!

This landing page serves as a Table of Contents and offers families and others many options to explore, including an overview of early intervention, how to find services in their state for their wee one, parent rights (including parents' right to participate), the IFSP, transition to preschool, and much more.

Just want an quick step-by-step overview of early intervention?

To give families the "big picture," share the 2022 update *Basic Steps of the Early Intervention Process* with families.

For Spanish-speaking families

CPIR offers a landing page called *Ayuda para los Bebés Hasta Su Tercer Cumpleaños*. Beginning there, families can read about early intervention, the evaluation process for their little one, writing the IFSP, and the value of parent groups and suggestions for where to find them.

10 Basics of the Special Education Process under IDEA

*In Spanish (**Sobre el proceso de educación especial**)*

Your Child's Evaluation (4 pages, family-friendly)

*In Spanish (**La evalución de su niño**)*

Parent Rights

*In Spanish (**Derechos de los padres**)*

Landing page, again, this time to a simple list of each of the parental rights under IDEA, with branching to a description about that right. Surely a bread-and-butter topic for parents!

All about the IEP Suite

(***Similar info about the IEP in Spanish***) The landing page gives you and families numerous branches to explore, beginning with a short-and-sweet overview of the IEP, a summary of who's on the IEP team (with ever-deepening information below and branching off), the content of the IEP (brief summary first, then in-depth discussion thereafter), and what happens with the IEP team meets.

Placement Issues

(***Basic info about placement in Spanish***) Again, start with the main landing page for this bread-and-butter topic. Take the various branches, depending on what type of info the family is seeking at the moment. Branches include: a short-and-sweet overview to placement, considering LRE in placement decisions, school inclusion, and placement and school discipline.

CPIR Resource Collections and Info Suites

The resources listed above cover just a few of the topics that Parent Centers often address. For a more robust index of key topics, try the *Resource Collections and Info Suites* resource, which will point you to where other resources on key topics are located on the Parent Center Hub.

Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities

In keeping with President Biden's Executive Order, signed on his first day in office, federal agencies have now issued Equity Action Plans for addressing equity issues in their individual agency scope and mission. These plans are quite relevant to family-led and family-serving organizations, especially plans from the Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services.

Fast Facts: Students with disabilities who are English learners (ELs) served under IDEA Part B

OSEP's *Fast Facts* series summarizes key facts related to specific aspects of the data collection

authorized by IDEA. This newest *Fast Facts* gives you data details about students with disabilities who are also English learners. (Want to see what **other** *Fast Facts* are available?)

Asian Americans with Disabilities Resource Guide

The *Asian Americans With Disabilities Resource Guide* was designed for Asian American youth with disabilities, allies, and the disability community in mind, in response to the significant information gap about Asian Americans with disabilities. Chapters include Advocacy 101, Accessibility, Culture, Allyship, and Resources.

Strategies for Partnering on Culturally Safe Research with Native American Communities

To identify strategies for promoting cultural safety, accountability, and sustainability in research with Native American communities, Child Trends assessed peer-reviewed and grey literature (e.g., policy documents and guidelines). Findings? To rebuild trust and improve health outcomes, research collaborations with Native American communities must be community-based or community-engaged, culturally appropriate, and recognize tribal sovereignty in the collection and use of data.

Understanding Screening

This toolkit helps educators and parents learn about screening and how screening can help determine which students may be at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia. From the National Center on Improving Literacy.

Inside an Evaluation for Learning Disorders

*(Also available in Spanish: **Un vistazo a una evaluación para los trastornos del aprendizaje**)*
If a child is struggling in school, the first step to getting help is an evaluation. A learning evaluation can give parents and the child's teachers valuable information about the child's strengths and weaknesses. It can also reveal what kind of support would be helpful. A full evaluation is necessary for a child to be diagnosed with a learning disorder. To help parents understand the process, the Child Mind Institute and Understood.org teamed up to create this 20-minute video that walks us through the evaluation process.

U.S. Department of Education Disperses Funds to Support Parents of Children with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education is announcing an additional $2.5 million investment to centers that serve a critical role for parents and families of students with disabilities across the nation. These supplemental grants to Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) ensure that all families have the information and training they need to participate effectively in helping their children and navigating the special education system. Two additional grants have been awarded to new Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) in Arkansas and New York.

These programs are part of the national network of 27 existing CPRCs and 65 PTIs. With the goal of supporting parents of the more than 7 million children with disabilities of all ages, from birth through age 26, parent center programs began as a single experimental center more than 45 years ago and have grown into a robust technical assistance program that directs more than $30 million in fiscal year 2023 across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the US territories.

"Parents are critical partners in our school communities, " said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "With these new grant funds, the Department of Education is continuing our strong support of the essential partnership between parents of students with disabilities and local schools. Parents, families, and caregivers must be equipped with the quality information they need to advocate for their child and deeply engage in their child's education. That is truer now more than ever, especially as we know the pandemic impacted students with disabilities in profound ways. These funds will help to ensure students with disabilities are on the road to success. "

Today's announcement comes while Secretary Cardona is participating in the Road to Success Bus Tour, a week-long, multi-state road trip that will show the many ways school communities are helping students recover and thrive – putting them on the road to success. On his stops today, he will be visiting a school in Virginia that has prioritized creating a culture of inclusion for all students with disabilities.

During the pandemic, parent centers connected with families of children with disabilities over 1.8 million times. These connections resulted in more parents and families of children with disabilities having the knowledge and information needed to support their children and access the resources needed to meet their academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs, throughout the pandemic and recovery.

PTIs exist in every state and provide training and information to parents of children with disabilities, particularly underserved parents, and parents of children who may be inappropriately identified. CPRCs are operated by local parent organizations and help ensure underserved parents of children with disabilities, including low-income parents, parents of children who are English learners, and parents with disabilities, have the training and information they need to enable them to participate effectively in helping their children.

The Biden-Harris Administration continues its dedication to ensuring that every child in America's schools has the opportunity to be successful. Part of that commitment is ensuring that states, districts, and schools have the resources they need to effectively support the students and families they serve. This administration has also demonstrated its commitment to meeting the diverse needs of children with disabilities nationwide with a historic request of $18.1 billion for Special Education, increasing regular annual funding for IDEA programs by $4.1 billion over a fiscal year 2022 annualized continuing resolution (CR) based on the fiscal year 2021 appropriation, with investments in state formula grants, personnel development grants, technical assistance, and parent resources.

U.S. Department of Education Announces 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona today recognized 297 schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2022. The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Secretary Cardona made the announcement during his Road to Success Back to School bus tour.

"I applaud all the honorees for the 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Award for creating vibrant, welcoming, and affirming school communities where students can learn, grow, reach their potential, and achieve their dreams," said Secretary Cardona. "As our country continues to recover from the pandemic, we know that our future will only be as strong as the education we provide to all of our children. Blue Ribbon Schools have gone above and beyond to keep students healthy and safe while meeting their academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. These schools show what is possible to make an enduring, positive difference in students' lives."

With its 39th cohort, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools. The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms and validates the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in striving for – and attaining – exemplary achievement.

National Blue Ribbon Schools serve as models of effective school practices for state and district educators and other schools throughout the nation. A National Blue Ribbon School flag gracing a school's entryway or on a flagpole is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning.

The Department recognizes all schools in one of two performance categories, based on all student scores, subgroup student scores and graduation rates:

- **Exemplary High-Performing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.

- **Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students.

Up to 420 schools may be nominated each year. The Department invites nominations for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award from the top education official in all states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and the Bureau of Indian Education. Private schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education.

Department Awards Over $7 Million to Eight Organizations to Highlight Parent Voices and Support Families Informing Student Development and Academic Recovery

The U.S. Department of Education announced awards totaling over $7 million to eight statewide organizations under the 2022 Competitive Grants for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) program, underscoring the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing efforts to enhance and increase parent and family engagement in local education. As the 2022-23 school year begins, and to help drive academic recovery, the Department is redoubling its commitment to providing states and communities with additional resources to support student learning and parental and family engagement.

These SFEC grants will provide financial support to organizations that offer technical assistance and training to state educational agencies and school districts that effectively engage families over policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student development and academic achievement.

"Congratulations to these new grantees on their work to advance innovative approaches that promote strong parent and family engagement for the academic success of all students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "The voices of parents and families have never been more critical to the success of our education system. Parents are our children's first and most influential teachers. We have an enduring commitment to parent and family engagement in all our work at the U.S. Department of Education. These new grantees exemplify the efforts we want to see across the country to improve our parent and family engagement."

Today's announcement comes while Secretary Cardona is participating in the Road to Success Bus Tour, a week-long, multi-state road trip that will show the many ways school communities are helping students recover and thrive – putting them on the road to success. On his stops today, he will be visiting a community school in Pennsylvania and will speak with parents about their role in supporting the academic success of their students.

The Biden-Harris Administration remains committed to elevating parent voices in education. Last month, the Department released a parent back-to-school checklist. The checklist helps parents, caregivers, and families engage with local school and district leaders about how they are supporting students as they recover from the impacts of the pandemic. This checklist elevates key evidence-based practices for supporting students' learning and mental health, and ensuring the safety of students and staff, which districts are encouraged to implement using American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other COVID relief funds. Through the ARP, the Biden-Harris Administration provided states and school districts with $130 billion to help students recover, succeed, and thrive. Earlier this year, the Department launched the National Parents and Families Engagement Council to facilitate strong and effective relationships between schools and parents, families and caregivers

Today's announcement reflects this year's SFEC competition priorities, which emphasize addressing the impact of COVID and academic recovery, using cross agency partnerships to better coordinate support for children, and promoting equity in student access to education resources and opportunities.

The SFEC grants will help position these states to develop resources and other supports to foster parental and family involvement in the academic setting. These grants will enhance statewide collaborations and communication to further the commitment by all for the success of our children.

https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/department-awards-over-7-million-eight-organizations-highlight-parent-voices-and-support-families-informing-student-development-and-academic-recovery

U.S. Department of Education Releases Back-to-School Checklist for Parents

The Department of Education released a back-to-school checklist for parents and families. The checklist, part of the Department's updated back-to-school resource site, will help parents, caregivers, and families engage with local school and district leaders about how they are supporting students as they recover from the impacts of the pandemic. This checklist elevates key evidence-based practices for supporting students' learning and mental health, and ensuring the safety of students and staff, which districts are encouraged to implement using American Rescue Plan and other COVID relief funds.

This back-to-school ARP checklist also recognizes 15 promising examples of how states and school districts across the country are already using federal ARP funds to support students and to staff schools.

Through the ARP, the Biden-Harris Administration provided states and school districts with $130 billion to help students recover, succeed, and thrive. The checklist will serve as a resource for parents, caregivers, and families to have an open dialogue with their school community about these critical funds. To foster transparency and community engagement, the ARP requires states, local districts, and public charter schools to have meaningful stakeholder engagement and publicly post their planned use of ARP dollars. This checklist can support those efforts.

"A new school year brings new beginnings, and today I am encouraging schools and families to reach a new level of communication and transparency to make sure our students and educators are getting the supports they need," said Secretary Miguel Cardona. "The checklist offers a starting point for parents, caregivers, and families to have meaningful discussions with school leaders about how they are supporting students, including with American Rescue Plan funds. The checklist can kickstart conversations about the services and supports that children can benefit from in this new academic year and beyond."

When President Biden took office, less than half of K-12 schools were open for in-person learning. Since then, with the help of ARP dollars, schools have safely reopened with improved

safety measures, programs to help students grow academically, and new supports for students' mental health and other basic needs.

Secretary Cardona joined a press call with White House officials, members of Congress, and local educators whose districts are among those being featured in order to encourage parents and families to use this checklist and discuss how the ARP is providing unprecedented resources for a successful and safe school year.

The checklist is broken into four categories:

- Student learning
- Addressing the needs of the whole child
- COVID-19 health and safety
- Engaging families

The states and school districts being recognized for their efforts utilizing ARP funds are:

- Arkansas
- Iowa
- Mississippi
- Puerto Rico
- Tennessee
- Aurora Public Schools in Colorado
- Denver Public Schools in Colorado
- Detroit Public Schools in Michigan
- Gaston County Schools in North Carolina
- Guilford County Schools in North Carolina
- Houston Independent School District in Texas
- Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky
- New York City Department of Education
- Saint Paul Public Schools in Minnesota
- Santa Fe Public Schools in New Mexico
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Increasing Pre-service Special Education Teacher Skills on Performance Feedback

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Abstract

Special educators are often placed in a collaborative leadership role, supporting others in implementing appropriate educational supports for students with disabilities across the educational environment. Furthermore, special educators are often seen as agents of change, often coaching peer-teachers to ensure best practices are being used to gain the most progress. This study investigated the impact of a training package focused on teaching performance feedback skills on the number of performance feedback statements made by 24 pre-service special education teacher majors during debrief meetings immediately following simulated teaching experiences. Results indicated that, prior to the intervention, participants gave their peers two and one half times more positive feedback than constructive and made themselves the focus of constructive feedback twice as often as their peers. Following the intervention, the number of constructive performance feedback statements given to peers increased while the number of positive performance feedback statements remained stable.

Keywords: performance feedback, peer feedback, teacher preparation, pre-service teacher, special education, Mursion, debrief meeting, inclusion, leadership, collaboration

Increasing Pre-service Special Education Teacher Skills on Performance Feedback

Teacher leadership has never been more important, especially for special education teachers who often find themselves in the role of collaborator and change agent for their schools as they seek to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Wasley (1991) once stated special education teachers must have "the ability to encourage colleagues to change [and] to do things they wouldn't ordinarily consider without the influence of the leader" (Wasley, 1991; p. 23), which holds true even more so today. The way teacher leaders view themselves has changed over the past 20 years. Whereas, once teacher leaders viewed themselves as a master teacher who carried out the decisions of others to provide efficient and effective instruction, they now see themselves as much more engaged, taking on the roles of redesigner, reformer, and mentor (Silva et al., 2000) as they strive to use best practices to educate students with disabilities. Special education teachers need to be experts in instructional strategies and supports for students with disabilities as well as effective collaborators with the other professionals in the schools.

For many special education teacher leaders, providing best practices for students with disabilities, such as inclusive instruction, requires changing the way educational initiatives have traditionally been done and continues to be an area in which many educators struggle (Fuchs, 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012). Despite the federal mandate that students with disabilities are taught in the least restrictive environment with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate (IDEA, 2004), barriers still exist (Turnbull, 2003). Oftentimes inclusion of students with disabilities falls short because of a lack of appropriate resources or personnel, inadequate training of educators responsible for providing education for students with disabilities (such as critical leadership skills), lack of support from administration, or simply not having the time needed to provide the necessary supports while balancing teaching typically developing students (Fuchs, 2010; Santoli et al., 2008). These barriers become even more cumbersome for general education teachers when faced with including students with more significant behavioral or academic needs.

In a qualitative study conducted by Fuchs (2010) examining teachers' beliefs about current barriers to successful inclusion, the author noted most participants shared the view of inclusion

as a positive initiative with benefits for both students with and without disabilities; however, inclusion in its current state was not favored due to their perceived inability to meet the demands inclusion places on a general education teacher and their classroom. This is not to say inclusion of students should be dismissed; conversely, ways in which special education teachers and general education teachers can work together to support students in inclusive environments should be identified. There are examples in the literature in which students from all ability levels have been successfully included and provided a rich academic experience (Carter et al., 2016; Collins et al., 2001; Hudson & Browder, 2014; Hudson et al., 2014). In most of these cases, the driving force behind this success was a strong collaborative relationship between the general education teacher and special education teacher.

This approach requires special education teachers to have the leadership skills to collaborate effectively with the other teachers and key personnel in their school to bring about necessary change. However, research demonstrates that many special education teachers often lack general leadership skills (Billingsley, 2007; Buell et al., 1999; Fuchs, 2010). Development of certain leadership skills, such as providing feedback to address barriers or enrich learning environments, is critical for special education teachers. To support students with more significant needs, it is imperative that a collaboration between the general educator and special educator be forged, as general educators rely heavily on the expertise of the special educator for understanding appropriate accommodations, modifications, communication needs, and overall ability to engage in an inclusive setting (McHatten & Parker, 2013).

DeMatthews et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of teacher leadership as essential to fostering inclusive environments for all students, including students with disabilities. Wenner and Campbell (2017) noted that teacher leaders are "uniquely positioned as collaborators with a capacity for modeling and refining content-specific instructional practices" (p. 140). This is especially true when considering the contextual factors that come into play within each unique learning environment. In particular, the ability of a special educator to provide meaningful peer feedback in relation to their specific content knowledge as part of the collaboration is critical (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). According to Sweigart et al. (2016), performance feedback has been very effective in improving a variety of teacher practices of in-service teachers, specifically

related to promoting positive behaviors in educational settings. Furthermore, to successfully collaborate with their general education partners, it is necessary for special educators to be able to provide performance feedback to peers in a way that supports the general educators providing effective inclusive experiences (Buell et al., 1999). Although research has demonstrated effectiveness for in-service teachers, empirical research examining ways for preparing pre-service teachers to provide optimal peer performance feedback is sparse.

There were earlier studies (Hudson et al., 2019; Hudson et al., 2018) that evaluated preservice teachers' perceptions of their own readiness to manage a special education classroom. In these studies, participants (pre-service special education juniors) were reluctant to give feedback to their peers during the debrief meeting immediately following the experience. As participants, each pre-service special educator taught a short lesson and, when they were not teaching, they observed their peers teaching. After everyone in the group had an opportunity to teach, the participants met as a group for a debrief meeting where the instructor asked guiding questions to encourage a discussion between participants about their experiences. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own experience as well as what they observed of their peers' experiences. Though the content of these discussions were not formally evaluated, the investigators noted anecdotally that participants gave very little feedback to their peers (either positive or constructive). The limited feedback they shared was focused on themselves and not their peers. Developing communication skills in regard to giving and receiving feedback are important for collaborative teaching, yet minimal research was found to provide guidance for how to prepare pre-service teachers with these essential skills.

Given the importance of teacher collaboration in the field of special education, teacher preparation programs must find ways to embed training into their undergraduate teaching programs with a focus on providing specific performance feedback not only to themselves, but to peer teachers as well. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of a training package on the number and type of performance feedback statements made by pre-service special education teacher majors. The research question was:

- What is the effect of a training package on the number and type of performance feedback statements made by pre-service special education teacher students over a series of three debrief meetings following simulated teaching experiences?

Method

This descriptive study examined quantitative and qualitative data on performance feedback statements. The number of performance feedback statements were collected, placed under predetermined categories, and analyzed from videotaped instructor-led discussions with pre- and post-interventions. Additionally, statements made by participants of significance were selected to provide a deeper level of understanding. Data were collected during the 10-minute debrief sessions following three Mursion simulated teaching experiences.

Participants

Twenty-four undergraduate special education teacher candidates (i.e., participants) were included in the study. Participants were pursuing a K-12 teaching license in special education for students with mild disabilities ($n = 7$) or for students with moderate or severe disabilities ($n = 17$) and all were enrolled in a classroom management course as part of their course of study. In this course, the focus was learning and applying behavior management principles to support students with disabilities who display challenging behavior across the academic setting. At this point in their academic careers, participants had completed approximately 30 hours of practicum experience in general and special education settings in which they were able to develop and teach lessons to students with and without disabilities. They had received feedback from K-12 practicum clinical teachers and university instructors. In addition, the preservice special education teachers were directed to engage in self-reflection throughout all practicum experiences, however providing feedback to peers in a formal manner had not been addressed. Participants' ages were between 20 and 24 years, two students were male and 22 students were female. The ethnicity breakdown

for the 24 participants was as follows: 22 White (n = 92%), one Biracial (*n* = 4%), and one Black (*n* = 4%).

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. Students who were enrolled in two sections of the junior-level classroom management course (i.e., SPED 3004: Managing the Learning Environment) were included in the study. The purpose for selecting this group of students was the convenience of embedding the intervention within the current course programming and the need to develop skills in giving performance feedback to educators who are implementing behavioral supports for students with disabilities and behavior challenges.

Research Design

A descriptive study was used to examine quantitative and qualitative data on performance feedback statements. Data were collected in the form of performance feedback statements from participants, documented via videotape, during three debrief meetings held with participants and instructor immediately following the simulated teaching experience in the Mursion lab. Participant statements were transcribed and coded by type of feedback. The first debrief meeting was conducted prior to the intervention, and the second and third meetings were conducted after the intervention. The independent variable was a one-hour intervention training package that included an instructor-made Microsoft™ PowerPoint presentation, a Lynda.com® module on providing feedback (i.e., *Communication in Teams: Providing Feedback*), and training handouts. The training was delivered to participants during a face-to-face class session as part of their curriculum. The dependent variable was the number positive and constructive performance feedback statements made by participants during Mursion debrief meetings. These statements were compared across sessions to evaluate the effect of the intervention.

Dependent Measure

The unit of measurement for this study was the performance feedback statements made by participants during the Mursion debrief meetings. Debrief meetings were captured on video

recordings as part of the participants' Mursion teaching experience. A research assistant listened to the recordings and transcribed the discussions verbatim into a Microsoft™ Excel document, stopping and starting the video as needed to capture the words said on the audio. To ensure that transcriptions were complete and accurate, after transcribing a session, the research assistant listened to the session again while reading the transcription and, if needed, made changes to the transcribed document. From the transcription, a reviewer (second author) sorted the participant performance feedback statements into six pre-determined categories. Three categories related to positive feedback, operationally defined as statements or feedback related to the teaching performance as favorable (i.e., gives positive feedback to self, a peer, or the group) and three categories related to constructive feedback, operationally defined as statements or feedback related to the teaching performance as needing improvement (i.e., gives constructive feedback to self, a peer, or the group). Since this intervention was developed to increase the abilities of participants to provide performance feedback, the three categories were pre-selected to examine any potential differences in providing performance feedback to self, a peer, or the group. Statements that did not contain feedback were not used. Once sorted, the number of statements for each type of feedback was totaled for each session and summarized in Table 1. In addition to sorting statements into these six categories, the reviewer also noted in a running tally whether the feedback discussed specific situations and/or focused on observable behaviors.

Table 1

Number and Type of Performance Feedback Statements Made by Participants During Mursion Debrief Meetings

Feedback Behaviors		Debrief Sessions		
		1	2	3
Gives positive feedback to self		2	0	0
Gives positive feedback to a peer		15	12	15
Gives positive feedback to the group		6	0	2
Gives constructive feedback to self		16	6	6
Gives constructive feedback to a peer		3	10	11
Gives constructive feedback to the group		5	0	4
	Total	47	28	38

Mursion Lab

Participants engaged in three simulated teaching experiences in the Mursion lab, a specially designed room at the university. The Mursion experience was provided through a commercially available platform in which participants were able to interact with five middle school-aged avatars in a simulated classroom. Participants interacted with the avatar students in real time using a predetermined scenario that was selected by the instructors (e.g., establishing classroom expectations on the first day of class). A remote offsite interactor, who could see and hear the participants in the lab, controlled the avatars and displayed challenging behaviors for participants to react to as prescribed by the scenario. Participants experienced the avatars and their classroom virtually on a large monitor in the front of the room. The lab space was also set up to resemble a classroom. When teaching, a participant stood in the center of the room in front of the large monitor. When observing, participants sat at tables on either side of the room that faced toward the center of the room. Each participant was provided the scenario (e.g., reviewing classroom expectations) one week prior to the Mursion session in the lab. Participants prepared a lesson in advance and then completed the simulated teaching experience individually, while peers observed and took notes to use during the debrief meeting immediately following the Mursion session. After all participants' finished teaching, the instructor held a 10-min debrief meeting.

Materials

Video Recording. Mediasite, a video and audio recording technology platform provided through the university, was used to record the video and audio for each session. Following each session, the video file was sent to the instructors via email. The audio portions of the debrief meetings were used for data analysis purposes and portions of the videotaped sessions were shown to participants during class. Instructors used the examples to stimulate discussion and provide specific feedback to participants as part of the training package, following the second session and prior to the third session. This provided an opportunity for instructors to model providing feedback, as well as provide guidance on feedback participants provided during the second session.

Mursion Teaching Scenarios. Participants engaged in three different teaching scenarios during their simulation activities in the Mursion lab. Most participants had no exposure to the Mursion mixed-reality simulation prior to this study, however three students had previously been exposed to the Mursion mixed-reality simulation through an activity as part of a course taken previously, different from the one presented. Small groups of students (i.e., 6-10) completed the sessions together, with each participant independently engaging in the simulation experience one at a time. Each participant spent 5 min teaching and observed their peers teaching for the remainder of the time for all three sessions. The avatars in the first session demonstrated few challenging behaviors and the level of challenging behavior increased with each session. For example, for the first session a behavior observed was student avatars falling asleep or being off task. The student avatars were easily redirected with minimal intervention from the participant. Example behaviors exhibited in the second Mursion session were texting in class after redirection or engaging in disrespectful verbal exchanges (e.g., "I don't have to listen to you"), but still were able to be redirected with two to three redirects. In the third Mursion session, student avatars engaged in behaviors such as using foul language toward the teacher or refusal to comply, with multiple redirects or ignoring of the behavior necessary. Since the study was embedded in a course on behavior management, participants' skill level, confidence, and demeaner when interacting with the avatars improved as the semester progressed, therefore the increase in behaviors exhibited by the avatars provided participants with a non-threatening, safe environment to practice behavior management skills, with the opportunity for feedback from peers and their instructor.

Prior to each scenario, participants were provided directions for preparing for the session. Participants were permitted to develop their own unique way of delivering instruction or leading the session. For the first scenario, participants were directed to be prepared to introduce the class members and reviewed basic classroom expectations (e.g., keep your hands and feet to yourself). For the second scenario, participants were directed to prepare to teach an alerting strategy in which avatar students responded to the teacher upon cue (e.g., eyes and ears on me). For the third scenario, participants were directed to prepare to teach a new academic skill to the avatar students (e.g., multiplication facts). Participants could bring materials or use the standing white board in their lessons, if needed.

Intervention

An intervention package including use of Lynda.com® (now called LinkedIn Learning), a power point presentation, and follow up session was used to train participants on how to identify and provide positive and constructive performance feedback to peer-educators. Lynda.com® is an online library of instructional videos that were available to faculty and students at the university where the research was conducted. For this study, a training module from the Lynda.com® library was used entitled, *Communication in Teams: Providing Feedback*. The training module included videos and handouts providing training on how to provide specific feedback based on observations. Participants were given the handouts to use for all Mursion simulated teaching sessions. The handouts and power point presentation are described below.

Handouts. Prior to implementing the Lynda.com® training module in class, participants were given handouts on feedback, including forms for collecting and organizing their observations and thoughts. The first was the "Situation-Behavior-Impact Feedback" graphic organizer (SBI; *Communication within Teams*, Lynda.com®) that included boxes to record details about the specific time, date, or location of the situation (i.e., S), observable behaviors without judgements or opinions (i.e., B), and the impact or result of the behavior observed (i.e., I). The second handout was the "After-Action Review" form (*Communication within Teams*, Lynda.com®) for reflecting on what happened, what worked well, what needed to be changed in the future, and key learnings. A third handout described observable feedback behaviors, including: specific, positive praise given; constructive criticism provided, discussed specific situations, focused on observable behaviors, included impact statements, and acknowledgement or response to receiving feedback.

Microsoft™ PowerPoint Presentation. A Microsoft™ PowerPoint Presentation was developed by the first author as a means to organize the presentation of the training modules provided by Lynda.com, materials from the modules, and procedures to be completed during the mixed reality sessions. Slides within the presentation included links to Lynda.com training module videos, as well as examples and descriptions of the handouts, guiding prompts, and other video examples.

Procedure

Mursion Session One. The first of three Mursion teaching sessions, lasting approximately one hour, was conducted in the Mursion lab during the designated class time and used a simulated teaching scenario as a platform for participants to provide performance feedback during the debrief meetings that followed. Participants were provided all the handouts (i.e., SBI Feedback graphic organizer) from the Lynda.com® training, however, they did not receive training on the use of the handouts until after the first Mursion simulated teaching session. Following the Mursion simulated teaching session, a 10-min group debrief meeting was held. The first guiding prompt focused on participants providing individual feedback related to positive classroom management interactions observed, the result of positive interaction, and potential changes or improvements. The second guiding prompt focused on participants providing individual feedback on classroom management challenges observed during the session, the result of the interaction, and potential changes or improvements. All participants had an opportunity to respond to the debrief questions. Following the group debrief meeting, the instructor completed the After-Action Review form which was shared with students during the next in-class session. The After-Action Review included a summary of feedback on participant performance collected by the instructors during the Mursion simulated teaching session. This session served as a baseline for the number of performance feedback statement provided, prior to intervention.

Performance Feedback Training. Following the first Mursion teaching experience, a one-hour training on providing performance feedback was given during the next designated class time. At the beginning of the training, participants were provided the SBI Feedback form, the After-action Review form, and the handout describing observable behaviors. Participants initially watched two short videos from the *Communication within Teams* module - Provide Feedback (3:49 min) and Structure Time for Reflection (3:51 min). Participants practiced completing the Observable Feedback Behaviors handout while viewing the Providing Feedback video (this was used later during class discussions). Next, participants practiced using the SBI Feedback form as a guide while viewing a video clip displaying an individual engaging with another individual exhibiting problem behaviors. Then, the instructor led a class discussion about feedback behaviors observed and participants shared notes taken using the SBI form. Last, following the discussion, the After-

Action Review was introduced, which participants completed based on the performance feedback provided in the class discussion. During this time the instructor provided guidance in completing the After Action Review through clarification, examples, modeling, and interactive discussion.

Mursion Session Two. Following the performance feedback training, participants engaged in the Mursion teaching session in the same manner as the first Mursion session, with the exception of the teaching scenario (i.e., teaching an alerting strategy) and an increase in behaviors exhibited by avatars. This session lasted approximately one hour. At this point participants had gained knowledge about behavior management strategies to be applied in a simulated experience. Once all participants had completed individual teaching simulations, the instructor prompted a group debrief session using the same procedures as in the first Mursion session.

Performance Feedback Training Follow Up. Between Mursion sessions two and three, the instructors also shared videotaped examples of the participants' teaching along with the After-Action Review to personalize the feedback for participants. This provided an opportunity for instructors to model providing feedback, as well as provide guidance on feedback participants provided during the second session. This session lasted approximately 15-min and was completed during a class within the following two weeks, during the designated class time.

Mursion Session Three. For the third and final Mursion session, all procedures for the second Mursion session were completed in the same manner, with the exception of two things. First, participants were prompted to consider the intervention review session and apply what they learned. Second, participants were directed to prepare to teach a different scenario (i.e., teaching a new skill) with behaviors escalated more than the previous session. Again, participants had continued to gain experience and knowledge about behavior management strategies, as well as become familiar with the Mursion mixed-reality experience. Specific discussions in class sessions following each session about addressing behaviors exhibited by the avatars also allowed for modeling and instructor provided feedback. This session also lasted approximately one hour in length.

Treatment Fidelity

Treatment fidelity data were collected throughout all three sessions using an intervention fidelity checklist (see Table 2) and a fidelity checklist for group debrief meetings (see Table 3). Each step of the intervention was checked for completion during the intervention session as well as during the group debrief meetings to ensure fidelity. Each debrief meeting was videotaped, which provided an additional manner in which researchers could ensure fidelity was implemented after the Mursion session.

Table 2

Fidelity Checklist for Intervention Delivery

1. Participants were provided with SBI Feedback form prior to video training.
2. Participants were provided After-Action Review form prior to video training.
3. Communication in Teams: Providing Feedback was presented to class
4. Participants were provided Observable Feedback Behaviors form and directed to look for these behaviors in the sample video.
5. Participants viewed video clip of sample video using SBI Feedback form as a guide.
6. Instructor led a class discussion about feedback behaviors observed and SBI feedback form notes.
7. After-Action Review form was reviewed by instructor with participants.

Note. SBI = situation, behavior, impact

Table 3

Fidelity Checklist for Group Debrief Meeting Discussions

1. Group debrief meeting was videotaped.
2. Group debrief meeting lasted 10 minutes
3. Each teaching candidate was provided an opportunity to respond to guiding questions.
4. Following the group debrief meeting, facilitator completed the After-Action Review form.

5. After-Action Review form was summarized by the instructor and shared with the teaching candidates during the next class session to provide positive and constructive feedback on their teaching performance.

Note. The After-Action Review form is from the Lynda.com® module, *Communication with Teams*.

Inter-rater Reliability

Six debrief meetings were transcribed, three from each instructor (i.e., session one, session two, and session three). Inter-rater reliability data were collected on two of the debrief meetings (i.e., 33%), session one for both instructors. For the purposes of calculating inter-rater reliability, statements from the debrief meetings were sorted by a second reviewer into the predetermined categories. Prior to the second reviewer conducting inter-rater reliability, the first reviewer trained the second reviewer. Training included sharing and explaining the coding categories and talking through examples of statements from a different session than was being compared. All questions regarding the coding procedure were answered.

The six coding categories included: gives positive feedback to self, gives positive feedback to a peer, gives positive feedback to the group, gives constructive feedback to self, gives constructive feedback to a peer, and gives constructive feedback to the group. Descriptive statements that did not contain any feedback were not coded or included. After the statements were sorted into the six categories, results were compared with the first reviewer's, category by category. For example, the number of statements sorted into the category *gives positive feedback to self* from the first and second reviewer were compared. An agreement was noted if the two reviewers had the same number of statements in the category and a disagreement was noted if the two reviewers did not have the same number of statements in the category. When there was a disagreement, the two reviewers discussed the specific statements in the category and came to an agreement on the number of statements for that category. All disagreements had to do with a reviewer counting a single feedback statement as two statements rather than one. To calculate inter-rater reliability, the number of agreements was divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplied by 100 to obtain a percent of agreement for the number of coded statements for each category.

Results

Inter-rater reliability data were collected on 33% of the Mursion debrief session transcripts and the percent of agreement was calculated for the purpose of demonstrating the amount of agreement between two individual raters. Using a statement-by-statement comparison, there were 43 agreements and 9 disagreements, resulting in 83% inter-rater reliability. The disagreements were discussed between the raters until a consensus was reached. Because a statement might be counted differently after consensus was reached, (e.g., a statement might be divided into two separate statements or vice a versa), the total number of statements used to calculate inter-rater reliability was different from the data in Table 1 for session one.

A total of 113 performance feedback statements were coded. The number of performance feedback statements by type of feedback are summarized across sessions in Table 1. Data from session one was collected before the intervention. Participants made nearly the same number of positive performance feedback statements ($n = 23$) as constructive ($n = 24$), however the positive feedback statements were overwhelmingly given to peers ($n = 15$) or to the group ($n = 6$), while the majority of constructive feedback statements were made about themselves ($n = 16$) compared to peers ($n = 3$) or the group ($n = 5$). Data from sessions two and three were collected after the intervention. In session two, more constructive feedback statements ($n = 16$) were made by participants than positive ($n = 12$). All the positive feedback statements were provided to peers, while the constructive feedback statements were divided between peers ($n = 10$) and themselves ($n = 6$). In session three, the constructive feedback statements ($n = 21$) once again outnumbered the positive feedback statements ($n = 17$). Participants focused their positive feedback on their peers ($n = 15$) and the group ($n = 2$) while their constructive feedback was divided between peers ($n = 11$), themselves ($n = 6$), and the group ($n = 4$). Overall, positive performance feedback statements remained stable across the three sessions; however, the number of constructive performance feedback statements to peers increased across sessions. Also, the total number of performance feedback statements varied across the sessions. The greatest number of performance feedback statements were made during session one before the intervention ($n = 47$), the least

number of statements were made during session two ($n = 28$), and, during session three, 38 performance statements were made.

Several statements of significance were made that may contribute to a better understanding of the overall impact and experience related to the intervention. Prior to the intervention, when prompted by instructors during the first Mursion debrief meeting, participants made over two and one half times more positive feedback statements than constructive (i.e., 21 to 8) to their peers, either individually or as a group, as these examples illustrate:

> *I thought you gave students autonomy a lot and you let them choose. I loved how you let them choose the rules. It wasn't just all your rules, you let them give input and I really thought that was good because giving students that autonomy, that's going to make them want to learn and be prepared and want to learn from you. So, I really liked that.*

Before the intervention, participants gave themselves twice as much constructive feedback as their peers (i.e., 16 to 8), as these statements illustrate:

> *Um, I think well at least for me, one thing that like I need to work on for Mursion next time is waiting for their response because it's delayed a little bit so even when you start to speak, they're probably already in the act of responding.*
> *I think I could've said okay, well write. I'll give you time to write. I should've given her time to write the rules, then look up at me.*

> *I think I want to work on my confidence, like right when I walk up, I feel like I was stuttering and I don't know. I think that right away could make you look kind of like a certain way to the students, like they could break your focus something, I don't know. And it's not that I want to work on like being sterner, it's just like [I want to have] more confidence.*

Also, prior to receiving the intervention, even when specifically asked to give constructive performance feedback, participants preferred to critique their own performance rather than their peers', as illustrated in this example:

> *Okay. Um, I think maybe it was just a simulation thing and we just didn't know wait time is challenging for maybe all of us. We didn't know how long it was going to take for them to reply so maybe, I know I did it. I just jumped into my next thing, but somebody had something to say so I kinda talked over them. But wait time is just a challenge.*

Lastly, prior to the intervention, participants mixed constructive performance feedback given to peers with positive feedback, as illustrated in these examples:

> *Good. Um, and then my thing was for [peer]. I loved your game and how it was like very interesting, but I feel as you get to that fifth person and they have to repeat ... their name and what it starts with and ... that's pretty tough for a fourth or fifth grader. So maybe just them repeating the one that's the person before them and that's it instead of just doing the whole thing ... it was still a great engaging activity and something you definitely could do with fourth graders. But I just feel ... I couldn't even remember all five of those, but everything else was perfect.*

> *I think the situation with [peer] that when Will [an avatar] fell asleep, I think she handled it really well, but maybe also like he said he was really tired, maybe pulling him aside and making sure he's okay, see if anything happened, [find out] why he didn't get enough sleep or why he was tired. That would have been better.*

> *And I guess what she was saying, like [avatar] was sleeping. Just make sure you call attention to that. You are scanning the room and calling attention to that. Everything else was great, but just know that while you are teaching other students might not be paying attention.*

After the intervention, participants continued to give positive performance feedback statements but focused all their positive performance feedback statements on their peers rather than themselves (i.e., 12 to 0 in session two and 17 to 0 in session three). Participants also gave more constructive performance feedback statements to their peers than themselves. The number of constructive performance feedback statements given to peers regarding their performance increased from 8 to 10 to 15 over the three sessions. These data indicate that, after the intervention, participants were more willing to give their peers constructive feedback than before the intervention, as these statements illustrate:

> *Well, for me personally, when they were talking about the superheroes and stuff, I know it is important to give them that time to talk about things that they want but know when to redirect it. I feel like I may have let them talk about it a little too long before redirecting so I may try to cut it a little sooner but still give them that chance to express themselves and talk about their interests and stuff.*

> *The only thing that I would say to change or improve would be maybe smile more because you are a little bit intimidating. Maybe that's a good thing, I don't know, but I don't know if it is just a Mursion nervous thing but maybe be a little bit relatable or like friendly, but it was really good, really good instruction.*

> *I think you could have maybe gone over the topic a little more, like the attention getter a little more. Well, the students were confused, but you quickly [adjusted and] were like maybe it would be easier for you to raise your hand. Some teachers would be like my way or the highway type of attitude, but you were like yeah, if that is easier for you, we can do it that way.*

As the researchers sorted performance feedback statements into categories for analysis, they also noted if the statement discussed specific situations and whether the statement focused on observable behaviors. In reviewing these data, it seems that most participants discussed specific situations in their performance feedback statements, as these examples illustrate:

I am going to do [peer]. I like that you connected with the students. One of them said … that you connected with [avatar] in saying that you liked something that he liked as well. I think you also did it with [avatar] as well. But, just noticing that you and him and you and the other student [avatars] all connected and are all the same and you do the same things they do and you like the same things they like, I think it helped you become more personable.

I guess [peer], you had the kid on his phone and then the other student went on his phone and then she fell asleep. So, I guess maybe being more observant as you are speaking to them. Just constantly scanning back and forth to see what they are doing would allow you to kind of catch it a little bit faster so that it doesn't spiral.

I'll talk about I liked the way [peer] used everybody freeze, all eyes on me. I thought he had a really good strategy that he chose and also the way he introduced and structure, it seems like he followed an outline.

Much of the performance feedback given by participants also focused on observable behaviors rather than opinions and judgements, as this statement illustrates:

I also really liked [peer] when you were asking them about different types of fiction and they were like, "there is no creativity anymore," and you turned that behavior into, "Well if we get through this lesson we can write our own fiction," and then it turned their complaints into motivation for them to behave again and I thought that was really effective.

However, other participants struggled giving performance feedback that was focused on observable behavior, such as this example:

It shows that like as students they are on the same level and they agree and this new student coming in can see the respect that they have and the understanding for the rules, I guess. They were very positive, like when they were talking to each other like you could

tell they were close, kinda like got along, like they already liked each other 'cause they were like liking the same things and they were like talking about them and kind of like boosting each other. I just thought that was kind of a positive interaction.

Discussion

Special education teacher leaders are needed today to forge collaborative relationships with general education teachers and other key personnel in schools to provide meaningful and productive inclusive experiences for students with disabilities (Da Font & Barton-Atwood, 2017; Obiakor et al., 2012). Although many special educators may not see themselves as leaders, the role of a special educator requires leadership qualities in order to collaborate and/or consult across a number of contexts (Billingsley, 2007). Providing specialized knowledge in this manner to facilitate the support of individualized student needs is foundational in the success of any student with a disability, yet pre-service teachers often fall short in terms of leadership preparation when entering the field.

This study used a training package that included a module and handouts from Lynda.com® focused on giving feedback and an instructor-made Microsoft™ PowerPoint presentation to teach pre-service special education teachers to provide performance feedback to their peers, an important skill for teacher leaders. It was noted anecdotally in previous research (Hudson et al., 2019; Hudson et al., 2018) that during Mursion debrief meeting discussions, participants were reluctant to give feedback of any kind, be it about themselves or their peers. This study used the debrief meetings to encourage participants to reflect on their own teaching performance as well as the performance of their peers' and articulate performance feedback based on what they saw and experienced.

The total number of performance feedback statements varied across sessions (see Table 1). Session one had the most performance feedback statements ($n = 47$) while the second session had the least ($n = 28$). The third session had 38 performance feedback statements, an increase of 10 from session two. These differences may have been caused by the fact that in the first session, before receiving the intervention, participants had few skills in giving constructive feedback to

their peers about their teaching performance and, when asked to give constructive feedback, they preferred to give it to themselves. It is also possible that participants were unaware that they tended to give few constructive feedback statements. After the intervention, though, the number of performance feedback statements fell by 40%, from 47 to 28. These data indicate that participants were more hesitant to give performance feedback statements than in the first session. The length of time for the debrief meetings and the guiding questions asked did not change across sessions, so these do not explain the decrease in the number of statements made during session two. The authors speculate that this hesitancy could be due to the phase of learning the participants were experiencing (i.e., acquisition) because participants had been taught how to provide feedback to their peers between sessions one and two and were struggling to apply what they have learned to their practice.

Researchers were also interested in the quality of the participants' feedback statements. Specifically, researchers wanted to know if participants utilized other important skills taught in the course, including whether they discussed specific situations in their feedback statements and whether they focused their feedback on observable behaviors, without subjective judgments or opinions. By the third debrief meeting, participants provided more constructive feedback statements to their peers than in session two, which could mean that participants were beginning to demonstrate some fluency of their newly acquired skills. As with any newly acquired skill, providing opportunities for practice not only helps build fluency, but confidence as well. Providing multiple opportunities in authentic environments is recommended in order to build important teacher skills (Leko et al., 2015).

The importance of special educators having the ability to identify observable behaviors is well-known. Not only is the ability of special educators to identify and articulate observable behaviors to others a critical skill for special educators to develop in general, it is also a necessary component for providing performance feedback. This intervention provided multiple opportunities to practice both of these skills in a simulated classroom setting, which led to growth across both skill sets.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of this study should be interpreted with these limitations in mind. First, the intervention was implemented by two different instructors in different sections of the same course, so it is possible that the intervention package could have been implemented differently across the two sections, which may have affected the results. However, this limitation was mitigated by both instructors following a fidelity checklist for delivering the intervention package and engaging in discussions during the debrief meetings (see Tables 1 and 2). Additionally, both instructors covered the same content during their courses and participated in course-alike meetings before classes began.

Secondly, it is possible that some data were not captured from the debrief meetings. However, the use of audio recordings from the videotaped sessions makes this limitation highly unlikely. Additionally, after transcribing each session, the written transcription of the debrief discussions was checked for accuracy using the audio recordings. All debrief meetings were limited to 10 minutes so that the opportunity for data collection was the same across sessions.

Thirdly, the research design itself may be open to numerous threats to internal validity. It is possible that participants experienced an increase in maturity over the duration of the study, as well as became more comfortable with the mixed reality experience, leading to potential inaccuracies in intervention contributions. Additionally, the level of problem behavior presented by the student avatars and varied teaching expectations across sessions had potential to impact the performance feedback statements. Although these factors pose a threat in regard to the validity of the intervention, a feature of the intervention package was the opportunity to hone performance feedback skills through opportunities for practice, which were provided through the repeated mixed reality Mursion sessions.

Suggestions for Practice

The intervention package used in this study was easily embedded by instructors during face-to-face class meetings. Instructors often seek ways to improve leadership skills of their students, yet

may lack the time and resources to do so. This intervention package took a relatively short period of time (approximately two 1-hour class periods and two 1-hour sessions providing opportunities to provide performance feedback) and led to an impact on participant leadership skills that has the potential to continue to develop, using the information provided within the module as a springboard for application in future settings. Moreover, given the handouts provided were developed for general use, they can be used across a variety of applications in the future, leading to generalization of the skill.

In addition, the intervention served as an effective tool for acquiring skills in giving constructive performance feedback to peers about their teaching. As illustrated in Table 1, during session one's debrief meeting, very few constructive performance feedback statements were made by participants to their peers. Instead, participants chose to give themselves constructive feedback instead. Following the intervention, however, participants provided more constructive feedback statements in the second and third debrief meetings.

While best practices for providing enriching practicum experiences involve placement in "real" schools, the mixed-reality Mursion experience allowed participants to practice behavior management skills in a safe environment, where inappropriate behaviors could somewhat be controlled as students increased skill level. Additionally, the Mursion simulated teaching sessions and debrief meetings were already part of the course and offered a rich environment to discuss and provide feedback to participants while their teaching experience is still fresh. However, if a Mursion lab is not available for teacher training, simulated role-play activities with debrief meetings can be conducted in the classroom. Role-play experiences are simulated realistic situations that provide opportunities to interact with other people in a managed way in a supported environment (Hidayati & Pardjono, 2018; Rao & Stupans, 2012) and can be as effective in training pre-service teachers with certain skills as the Mursion lab. For example, Hudson (in press) evaluated simulated role-play experiences in the Mursion lab and the university classroom with undergraduate special education majors and found that high-quality role play activities in both environments had a similar effect in training participants to implement the constant time delay procedure to teach vocabulary words with fidelity.

Conclusion

Research has demonstrated the need for inclusive educational experiences for all students with disabilities, as well as the feasibility to do so with appropriate supports in place. In order to ensure appropriate supports are in place, collaborative relationships between special and general educators are critical. Furthermore, the role of the special educator in these collaborative relationships requires performance feedback to be shared with peer-educators who are partners in providing much needed inclusive experiences for students with all levels of need. This study used an intervention package to promote performance feedback (positive and constructive) for participants. Prior to the intervention, participants gave nearly the same number of positive performance feedback statements as constructive, but most of the constructive feedback was focused on their own teaching performance rather than their peers' performance. After the intervention, the number of constructive performance feedback statements made by participants regarding their peers' teaching performance increased while the number of positive performance feedback statements remained stable across all sessions. Thus, participants were able to improve upon the much needed communication skills of providing effective performance feedback, which can be applied in future educational settings, facilitating positive inclusive experiences.

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Safe Schools Checklist

(2022, February) | *Useful to parents, students, school leaders, and school personnel with respect to protecting the return to in-person learning against COVID-19 and its variants* |

As we return to in-person learning in schools, parents and schools alike are concerned that COVID-19 and variants of the virus could all too easily shut down students returning to school, as has repeatedly happened since the pandemic began.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides a website dedicated to preventing current and future shutdowns, should a variant to COVID (or the current variants) cause a resurgence of infection and heightened risks of exposure. That website–called ***We Can Do This***–includes resources such as the *Safe Schools Checklist*, which is available in English and Spanish and which has sections addressing what parents can do to protect their children and what school systems and communities can do the maintain in-person learning all year long.

Access the English version of the checklist at:
https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/resource/safe-schools-checklist

Access the Spanish version of the checklist at:
https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/resource/safe-schools-checklist-spanish

The Resolution Process in Part B of IDEA

IDEA now requires that school systems convene a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving notice that a parent has filed a due process complaint and *before* the school system initiates the due process hearing hearing. The resolution process became part of IDEA in its most recent amendments (2004).

The purpose of the resolution meeting is for parents to discuss their due process complaint and the facts that form the basis of that complaint, so that the school system has the opportunity to resolve the dispute without holding a due process hearing. That said, read more about the resolution process below, in these brief sections:

- Resolution process, summarized
- Timelines
- Participants
- Failure to participate
- Results of the meeting
- Next set of timelines: Due process hearings
-
  Then go to these two separate pages for the details. *These details are important to know*, if you're thinking about using the resolution process as an approach to resolving a dispute in special education. The summary below is *not a substitute* for knowing the actual details of IDEA's regulations and requirements. It is just a summary.
- The Resolution Process, in Detail
- IDEA Regulations on the Resolution Process

The Resolution Process, Summarized

The resolution process is new in IDEA, so not much is known about it yet, except how it is described within the law and its implementing regulations. States are busy implementing this newest addition to IDEA's dispute resolution options; as time goes by, we'll learn more about state policies and local implementation. It's important to know that, unlike mediation, the resolution process is not voluntary. IDEA *requires* it, as described at §300.510. This summary will take a look at the basic details of how the resolution process is expected to work.

Timelines

The LEA must convene the meeting within 15 days of receiving a parent's due process complaint, and before convening a due process hearing. There are only two circumstances in which the resolution meeting may be skipped:

- if both parties agree in writing to waive the meeting, or

- if both agree to use the mediation process instead.

Interestingly, convening a resolution meeting is *not* required if the *public agency* files the due process complaint.

Participants

IDEA states that the parents and relevant member or members of the IEP team who have specific knowledge of the facts identified in the parent's due process complaint. The group must include a representative of the public agency who has decision-making authority on behalf of that agency [§300.510(a)(1)]. And who decides which IEP team member(s) are "relevant?" IDEA is very clear about this: The parent and the LEA *together* determine the relevant member or members of the IEP team that will attend the resolution meeting. Furthermore, "relevant" members will be those with "specific knowledge of the facts identified in the parent's due process complaint" [§300.510(a)(1)].

Wondering if attorneys may be involved in the resolution meeting? Simple answer: The LEA's attorney may not be included in the meeting unless an attorney accompanies the parent [§300.510(a)(1)(ii)].

Wondering if participants must keep the information shared in a resolution meeting confidential? The answer is: No. IDEA <u>regulations for the resolution process</u> do not mention confidentiality at all.

Failure to Participate

What happens if one of the disputing parties (parent or LEA) fails to show up for, and participate in, the resolution meeting? Or if the LEA doesn't follow through on its obligation to schedule the meeting? Provided that the parents and LEA haven't agreed in writing to waive the resolution meeting, what happens when either fails to participate in the meeting will depend on which party we're talking about.

- When parents fail to participate: The LEA can ask the hearing officer to dismiss the parents' due process complaint.
- When the LEA fails to schedule the meeting or participate in it: Parents may seek the intervention of the hearing officer to begin the timeline for a due process hearing [§300.510(b)(5)].

Results of the Meeting

If a resolution to the dispute is reached at the resolution meeting, the parent and the LEA must enter into a legally binding, written agreement [§300.510(d) and (e)]. That agreement:

- must be signed by the parent and a public agency representative with "the authority to bind the agency";

- is enforceable in any state court of competent jurisdiction (a state court that has authority to hear this type of case) or in a district court of the United States; and

- may be voided by either party (the parent or the LEA) within three business days of the date the agreement was signed.

If the parents and the LEA fail to reach an agreement during the resolution process (or agree to waive the process altogether), the next step will be the due process hearing, a more formal, often costly legal proceeding.

The Next Set of Timelines: Due Process Hearings

A different timeline attaches to due process hearings: 45 days to reach a decision in the hearing. This timeline starts ticking the day after one of the following events occurs:

- Both parties agree in writing to waive the resolution meeting;

- Both parties agree in writing that no agreement is possible; or

- Both parties agree in writing to continue mediation at the end of the 30-day resolution period, but later, the parent or public agency withdraws from the mediation process. [§300.510(c)(3)]

About CADRE!

We also highly recommend visiting CADRE, the National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education, where you'll find a wide range of materials in English and Spanish to help you understand how to resolve disputes in special education. Find CADRE at: http://www.cadreworks.org/

Need more detail about the Resolution Process?

As mentioned above, more information and indepth exploration of the resolution process are available in two companion pages:

- The Resolution Process, in Detail
    - https://www.parentcenterhub.org/details-resolution/
- IDEA Regulations on the Resolution Process
    - https://www.parentcenterhub.org/regs-resolution/

Book Review: Graceful Leadership in Early Childhood Education

By Shelbi Sworn

The purpose and thesis of this book was to share some of the author's professional journey and the lessons she learned on the road to leadership. It was a guide and resource for readers in search of support in leadership. Throughout the book, Ann Terrell defined leadership as graceful just as titled.

A few themes that stood out to me was that leadership is graceful which is the opposite of what we usually see in leadership everywhere but especially in education. It highlighted that leaders need a strong foundation. It reminded the reader to position themselves to be ready when an opportunity presents itself.

Some key quotes from *Graceful Leadership:*

- "With graceful leadership, we all learn and grow together" (Terrell, 2018, p.1).
- "As a leader, you must also be an effective communicator (Terrell, 2018, p. 19)".
- "The term *grace* is not often, if ever associated with leadership. Leadership is often equated with dominance and ferocity, position and power (Terrell, 2018, p. 1)".

    I enjoyed the recognition the author gave to the women who she encountered as mentors and role models who have helped pave the way for her. As quoted in Terrell's book, "behind every successful woman is a tribe of other successful women who have her back" (2018, p. 67). Terrell encourages readers in leadership to seek out their mentors and not to be shy about reaching out to someone you admire in leadership for support.

In Fullan's *Leading in a culture of change*, his book focused on leadership in understanding change, creating relationships with the staff as a leader, and building knowledge as a team. Terrell also touches on creating relationships in leadership, becoming a mentor and strategies for how to become a good leader. She stressed the importance of leading with grace, honesty and integrity which all leaders should aspire to have such qualities. I also admired how Terrell shared

her opportunities and obstacles she faces as both an African-American and a woman in leadership.

<div align="center">References</div>

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Book Review: Culturally Responsive School Leadership

By Alycia Brown

In the past, Khalifa worked as a leader teacher, a central district administrator, and a public-school teacher in Detroit. At the University of Minnesota, Khalifa is currently the Robert H. Beck Professor of Ideas in Education. In urban school contexts in the US, Khalifa's research has mostly focused on the idea of culturally responsive school leadership. In addition, Khalifa offers consulting services to schools and school systems across the nation, assisting them in conducting equity audits and correcting achievement gaps.

Culturally Responsive School leadership is part of a series on Race and Education. The goal of the series is to advance research on race to influence practice, policy, theory, and action.

In this book, Khalifa focuses on how all urban school leaders (from any race and ethnic background) can support minority students. He posits that while culturally responsive methods have been presented and taught to teachers, most school leaders are not familiar with the concept. Khalifa's make a compelling case that Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL), independent of the kids' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, must be a top concern for urban school leaders if they are to become effective instructional leaders. The author further suggests that school leaders should practice critical self-reflection, assist teachers in becoming culturally aware and responsive, aid them in creating curricula that are responsive to unfamiliar cultures, create welcoming and secure learning environments, and engage the entire community. The author provides helpful suggestions and tactics for school administrators and long-lasting systemic transformation. For instance, discussion questions (self-reflection questions) and occasionally other questions derived from the embedded case study are provided to the readers at the conclusion of each chapter. Additionally, Khalifa offers several beneficial exercises that school administrators can carry out with their team. The book's tables also include exercises and important pictures. To be culturally sensitive school leaders, for instance, the author suggests

some behaviors to avoid and others to adopt to be culturally responsive to the school (see page 87 on Inclusive and Exclusive School Space).

Main Theme

Understanding the function of culturally sensitive school leadership in educational transformation was the aim of this study. A two-year ethnographic study of a high school principal in a mid-sized college town in the Greater Detroit area of Michigan provided the data for this book. An African American principal with 40 years of experience teaching in schools served as the study's principal. Secondary data came from a few other Michigan districts as well as from districts in San Antonio, Texas.

Field notes with detailed descriptions, observations, principal and student interviews, and document analysis such as school, county, and district statistics were all used to collect data. Additionally, media articles and reports about the site under study were included in the data. The author also paid visits to community-based and educational websites. Khalifa also observed students in their homes, towns, and schools to collect their perspectives. The author conducted member checking, often known as collecting data from a variety of sources throughout time and asking his interview subjects to verify his conclusions. Confidentiality and anonymity were utilized to hide both the study participants' and the schools' identities.

In Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Khalifa does a fantastic job of advocating that schools visit communities and moving leading to enhance from the educator in the classroom to the administrator in the office. He seems to live on the plausible but false idea that great leaders can alter schools. Having a great principal may be important but not sufficient. Readers should be aware of restricting elements including severe political entanglements, unreliable educators, awful school funding, and extreme poverty. The educational landscape is complicated, nuanced, and chaotic.

What Khalifa has added to the body of literature is not an easily accessible solution to the educational problems that minoritized students face. In any event, it is a contemporary and pertinent intervention for school principals who work with students of color and who want to advance their practice by addressing and resolving systemic problems. The goal of Khalifa's

Culturally Responsive School Leadership is to support school leaders in their efforts to teach and learn about urban kids.

Key Quotes

"*An awareness of self and his/her values, beliefs, and/or dispositions when it came to serving poor children of color.*" (Pg. 60)- This quote led Khalifa to propose that this awareness, often known as a critical consciousness, can be developed. It is essential but insufficient to develop a critical mindset to have a good leadership training program that covers issues of race, culture, language, national identity, and other areas of diversity.

"*More often than not, the principal is directly responsible for oversight of the oppressive practice and has the power to confront and push back against it.*" (Pg 91)- In many other words, culturally sensitive school leadership calls for a broad viewpoint that recognizes privilege and power. The CRSL can have an impact to encourage staff to do self-reflection before they react to students in the classroom.

"*Centering children above yourself; preventing your fears, feelings, disagreements and emotions (etc.) from arrest this work.*" (Pg 131)- One of the main barriers to carrying out culturally sensitive work has been that leaders and employees naturally put their own sentiments first, disadvantageous to the treatment of pupils from underrepresented groups.

"The *principal and leadership team are responsible for developing teacher capacity for creating culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy.*" (Pg 155)- There are many strategies to increase this ability, including professional development in cultural sensitivity, collaborative walkthroughs, teaching instructors to use data to identify gaps, mentoring, and setting an example for staff members by modeling CRSL behavior.

"*Provide culturally responsive training and professional developments.*" (Pg 160)- Many schools in the US invite well-known speakers to lead discussions on racial issues, poverty, diversity, and relationships. Few can change the subject to how to institutionalize and sustainably practice culturally responsive education. Khalifa urged the school administration to hire

researchers who understand the connection between research-based findings (such as those highlighted in equity audits) and culturally responsible transformation.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Muhammad Khalifa's Cultural Responsiveness school leadership book is one of the few that emphasizes the idea of nurturing student and staff support by building school culture, making it unique in its endeavor on several levels. Khalida emphasizes several different methods that educators and administrators can work together to establish a relationship with parents and instructors, many of which many educational leaders may avoid even attempting to address.

Being "CRSL" in the effort to educate adolescents can be viewed as a challenge to all participants to change the way they view education, while remaining open to all possibilities however unlikely in the effort to foster a lifelong learner. Khalifa 's element of challenging everyone involved to draw on their interests, history, uniqueness, and innovativeness to produce a learning opportunity that really is so much more than just pleasurable for pupils, but one they will remember for a lifetime, gives this theme its strength.

It is difficult to believe otherwise given how educators and teachers continue to fight against school leadership, trends, and surprising outliers. All people could benefit from this because education is not what it once was. The author's success in employing a variety of unusual yet captivating tactics both within and outside the classroom to boost students' self-confidence only serves to reinforce this.

Although this book may feel a connection with many aspiring teachers and administrators, it falls short in its emphasis on school culture, which may not translate well to the analysis side of education. There is a lot of discussion about winning over staff members and retaining students, but little about how to keep them engaged in the lesson and on tasks academically. The reader may question whether testing is taken seriously in schools despite it being clear that these broad themes could overlap.

The reader might have benefited from instructions on how to pursue these unconventional mindsets and techniques to start putting strategies into practice and aid in the development of school culture. Even more intriguing would have been specific ways for administrators to bring

these strategies to their leadership teams, which would have provided school officials with a road map for how to start successfully implementing them.

Comparison to Fullan

Fullan's text focuses more on developing teams and how administrators should collaborate with all organizations to make strong leadership teams within the ranks of the education system than CRSL, which focuses on how educators may improve themselves for the benefit of their students. It is easy to comprehend how to arrange a plan, put something on paper, and then follow it out via Fullan's work.

Khalifa only tells his success story with a few small tips strewn throughout the book to encourage educators to trust in their thoughts and feelings and use this to regulate student involvement in the learning process. Fullan's explanations and imaginative sideboards consider making the basic principle of putting together effective strategy seem simple. For individuals who are just starting out as educational leaders, Fullan's text might be best used as an additional resource. While Khalifa's article has benefits of its own, Fullan offers specifics that people who are fresh to the field will most appreciate.

Khalifa, however, may have a greater impact on individuals who have held leadership roles for extended periods of time and require a new perspective on how to lead effectively. Leaders that are dealing with a significant cultural shift in their student body and are unsure how and where to deal with these new personalities could find the diverse techniques he employs to engage pupils further beneficial. It might be a useful model to apply Khalifa's techniques on top of a strong educational leadership base. On the other hand, for newcomers, it is too much to carry on the possibility of changing a school's culture while relying simply on Khalifa's book.

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Book Review: The Impactful Instructional Leadership and Framework for Success

By Marceline St Louis

Becoming a leader and leading an organization is not an easy task. A leader must have the passion to lead the organization. The Impactful Instructional Leadership and framework for success is a book that everyone who plans to become a leader should read. The book provides lots of insights on how to become an instructional leader. The book emphasizes the foundation of being a good leader begins with having a sharp vision, creating a vision statement, and helping staff create their vision statement. The book elaborates on important key components that a leader must have to be an impactful leader such as creating why statement (vision), developing leadership skills, sharing leadership, implementing triangulated data (data worrier), coaching teachers, and using evidence-based practices. All these components can have positive impact on the organization if leader follows them with integrity.

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