

Part I

Commitment to ALL!

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA, 2016), the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind Act (2002), is the nation's general education law and stands as the opportunity for all students, irrespective of their abilities, to receive support and resources to achieve at high levels. One of the primary goals and requirements of the mandate is to keep students with disabilities on track for success. All students must have access to the general education curriculum. Federal assurances are in place to keep students with disabilities from being denied access to graduation, college required courses, and other high-level curriculum requirements. ESSA identifies that students eligible for special education are general education students first and must receive access to and all of the benefits of participation in the general curriculum and the general education environment. Today, more than ever, general and special educators have opportunities to work in unison to better serve every students to achieve at levels higher than ever before. With the backing of federal and state mandates and state college and career readiness standards, educators can collaborate to provide equitable educational supports and services to all students. In this book we illustrate how *ALL* can mean *ALL*.

Chapter 1 provides the rationale for why we were compelled and needed to write this book. We describe the structure of the book and invite you to join us on the journey of *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-for-action*.

Chapter 2 introduces the four Tools of Cultural Proficiency and describes how they can be used as lenses to examine and implement inclusive educational practices. The tools are intended to inform you about the importance of knowing who you are and the values, beliefs, and assumptions you hold

about who learns and how they learn. Inclusive Education is defined and through a vivid classroom snapshot, illustrates how general and special educators can create and sustain a rich and nurturing educational environment through collaborative partnerships, such as co-teaching.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce the reader to the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency and the most instrumental tool—Overcoming the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency. Barriers to culturally proficient and Inclusive Schooling are identified and described in Chapter 3. Barrier busting principles, assumptions, and actions are offered in Chapter 4.

The tools that energize educators to move forward and transcend Barriers are the Guiding Principles and five Essential Elements defined in Chapter 2. The Guiding Principles are described in greater detail in Chapter 4. The Essential Elements are illustrated in Chapters 5 through 9 of the second part of this text. At the end of each of Chapters 5 through 9, a case story presents an Essential Element in action. The Lakeside Union School District is a composite district from our combined experiences and serves as the setting for educators who use the elements of cultural competency to create and sustain an inclusive educational environment. Chapter 10 guides you to develop a plan of action for Inclusive Schooling using the five Essential Elements.

We provide two resources following Chapter 10. Resource A, “Book Study Guide,” is offered for you to use with groups or individually to enhance and deepen knowledge, understanding, and commitment to the concepts and actions of culturally proficient Inclusive Schooling. Resource B, “Cultural Proficiency and Inclusive Schooling Books’ Essential Questions,” details a list of books about Cultural Proficiency and Inclusive Schooling. Essential questions help you focus on key concepts for each book.

NOTE TO THE READER: YOU AND WE

We use the pronoun *you* to personalize our relationship to the readers of this book. The pronoun *we* refers to the co-authors of the book. The co-authors have combined our years of work as educators, school administrators, parents, and scholar practitioners to bring you our experiences, our research, and our best thinking about the importance of responding to the need for educating all learners, unlike anytime in this nation’s history.

THE FORMAT OF THIS BOOK

This book is designed to be used as an individual guide for reflection and action. It is also designed to be used with interdisciplinary colleagues—in

small groups or in large groups—as a book study for developing a school or district action plan. The stakeholders of the groups may be parents, administrators, general and special education teachers, higher education faculty, and paraprofessionals. Each chapter has lines for you to compose your responses to prompts about the text and suggestions for reflection and action at the end of each chapter. The reflections and the dialogues with your co-learners will deepen your learning. Your learning community will be enhanced by the diversity of your perspectives, experiences, and expertise. We wish you well and now join you on your life-long journey of creating and sustaining culturally proficient inclusive educational environments for all learners.

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