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Valuing Exceptional Ethnic Minority Voices: New Leadership for a New Era

Festus E. Obiakor, Guest Editor

Educators and school leaders have continued to look for new ways of thinking and doing as they confront changes and shifts in paradigms and power. These changes and shifts have led to individual and systemic searches for new meanings (Frankl, 1984). In his search for meaning, Bell (1985, 1992) concluded that on issues of social justice “we are not saved” because of “the permanency of racism.” While I am not as pessimistic as Bell with regard to the permanency of racism, I agree that we live in a racialized and/or tribalized society where race has continued to matter (West, 1993). The challenge then to educators and school leaders is how best to make invisible voices visible. This special issue titled, “Valuing Exceptional Ethnic Minority Voices: New Leadership for a New Era,” is a remarkable effort by Dr. Faith Crampton, Executive Editor of *Educational Considerations*, to highlight those invisible “special” voices that are rarely heard. These voices are the voices of ethnic minorities who are at risk of being misidentified, misassessed, miscategorized, misplaced, and misinstructed because they look, talk, learn, and behave differently (Obiakor, 1999).

Current demographic changes in society indicate that there must be similar kinds of changes in schools and programs. These changes call for a new kind of educational paradigm and a new kind of shift in power by school leaders and administrators (Beachum & Obiakor, 2005). Consider this fact: Not long ago, the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) and the U.S. Department of Education (2001) noted that some disproportionality exists in public school enrollments and racial/ethnic special education placements. For instance, in 2000-2001, Anglo Americans showed a national population of 67% in public school enrollment and 4.3% in special education placement. On the other hand, African Americans showed a national population of 17% in public school enrollment and 20% in special education placement. Interestingly, public school teachers are mostly Anglo Americans and the majority of their students who receive special education services are minorities. As it appears, there continues to be a cultural disconnect between teachers and students. It is reasonable to argue that what these students and their communities bring to school deserves to be incorporated into what teachers and school leaders do. As an imperative, their multicultural voices must be valued and heard if their potential be maximized (Obiakor, in press). The law demands it, and the “heart” appreciates it!

This special issue, to a large measure, focuses on how administrators can use culturally responsive leadership strategies to respond to current demographic shifts in school programs. In this special issue, Bakken, O'Brien, and Sheldon address changing roles of special education administrators with regard to multicultural learners; Mukuria and Obiakor go beyond the narrow confines to discuss special education leadership for ethnically diverse urban learners. Ashbaker and Morgan describe the role of administrators in paraprofessional supervision to support ethnic minority students with special needs. Obi discusses the management of transition and student support services for ethnically diverse college students with learning disabilities; and Obiakor, Beachum, Williams, and McCray describe how to build successful multicultural special education programs through innovative leadership.

In conclusion, this special issue brings to the forefront critical issues confronting ethnic minorities in educational and societal settings. From my perspective and from the perspectives of scholars involved in this special issue, we need innovative educators and leaders who understand their roles in this era of change. The reasons are simple: Race continues to matter to us, and our society continues to change at a startling pace.

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Changing Roles of Special Education Administrators: Impact on Multicultural Learners

**Jeffrey P. Bakken, Mary O'Brian,
and Debra L. Shelden**

The standards movement has been a part of education for almost the last half century (Popham, 2001; Sirotnik, 2004). According to several researchers (e.g., DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Lashley & Boscardin, 2003; Marsh, 2000; Villa & Thousand, 2000), there have been significant changes in the roles that school leaders must fulfill to implement a standards-based educational accountability system. The requirements of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act appear to be changing the manner in which special education administrators conduct their work (Hochschild, 2003). As it stands, districts and schools are viewed as an amalgam of complex relationships (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005) that comes together as learning communities to meet accountability targets for all students. This means that all students regardless of their cultural backgrounds need to benefit from instruction. The requirements for building a learning community involve the skills of collaboration and empowerment of others. Apparently, developing productive partnerships will exceed the previously defined narrow interpretation of collaboration with families and other professionals (Crockett, 2002). Standards-based accountability practices which disaggregate data based on specific subgroups, one of which is students with disabilities, are a result of the concern that exclusion of students from testing distorts the efficacy of educational reform efforts (Heubart & Hauser, 1999; McDonnell, McLaughlin & Morison, 1997; Schulte & Villwock, 2004). However, concerns have also been raised regarding the validity of conclusions drawn from large-scale accountability data (Hargreaves, 2003; Schulte & Villwock, 2004; Ysseldyke & Bielinski, 2002). As Hargreaves (2003) pointed out, "[T]he rightful pursuit of higher standards has degenerated into a counter productive obsession with soulless standardization" (p. 82).

There is some concern that white and middle class teachers and students who have traditionally done well in the school system will

continue to perform and that multicultural students with disabilities who have traditionally struggled in schools will be further stigmatized by high stakes accountability measures (Hochschild, 2003). As a result, special education administrators must rededicate themselves as key leaders in the school system to ensure that accountability assessment does not devolve into an exclusionary phenomenon for multicultural students with disabilities. Clearly, they must build learning communities at school sites in order to provide valid and reliable data on the performance of multicultural students with disabilities on large scale assessments. They must continue to be the bridge between special education and general education in regard to accountability issues (Crockett, 2002). Additionally, they must endeavor to use data to make decisions about the implementation of research-based practices (Gable & Arllen, 1997) for students who are struggling as well as multicultural students with disabilities. Providing appropriate instruction based on standards will enhance the use of data-based decision-making to facilitate all students in meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) marker designated by NCLB.

New Ways of Accountability for Special Education Administrators

The current method of determining AYP has been questioned by researchers (Schulte & Villwock, 2004; Ysseldyke & Bielinski, 2002). The concern is not accountability, but the method of determining growth. *Value-added accountability*, a different method for determining AYP, is important for special education administrators to understand and implement. Measuring students' progress based on their individual beginning level allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to demonstrate effective teaching for multicultural students with disabilities. Rather than relying solely on assessments of large groups, a value-added approach uses aggregated results of individual students' performances. Multicultural students with disabilities can demonstrate progress towards standards if measurement systems are designed to facilitate this. As it stands, value-added systems are beginning to receive attention from researchers and practitioners and ought to be an important part of future practice for special educators. In order to provide effective input into federal and state policies, special education administrators must understand the value-added concept.

The concept of measuring students through a *static cohort model* (see Schulte & Villwock, 2004; Ysseldyke & Bielinski, 2002) appears to be another viable option to determine AYP for multicultural students with disabilities. This method relies on a longitudinal approach to data analysis on individual cohorts rather than a comparison of different groups of students at a given grade level. Schulte and Villwock (2004) noted that when using a "growth model," the performance of students in special education was seen to be less discrepant from the performance of students in general education. As intuitive as this may seem to educators, accountability assessment does not currently use this type of analysis. Special education administrators must become familiar with "growth models" and advocate for their use with multicultural students with disabilities.

A thematic shift in educational reform involves dramatic changes in teaching and learning. As Marsh (2000) pointed out, this shift can be viewed as complementary with the shift toward a standards-based approach to education. As systems clarify standards, there tends to be increased scrutiny of curriculum and instruction. The special education administrator's role as an instructional leader is critical in promoting successful outcomes for multicultural students with disabilities.

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Instructional leaders are closely involved with the technology of teaching and learning, have a sophisticated conceptualization of professional development, and effectively utilize data in decision-making (King, 2002). One of Crockett's (2002) key principles for administrative responsive leadership in special education requires "...leaders who are skilled at supervising and evaluating educational programs in general, and individual programming in particular, and who foster high expectations, support research-based strategies, and target positive results for learners with exceptionalities" (p. 163). As instructional leaders, special education administrators must support the implementation of evidence-based practices. There is widespread agreement that a gap persists between research and practice in the field of special education (Carnine, 1997; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Greenwood & Abbott, 2001), and an emerging understanding that comprehensive and responsive professional development activities play a significant role in bridging that gap (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002; McLeskey & Waldron, 2004; Schiller & Malouf, 1995). Administrators must support the design of effective professional development.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) discussion of the relationship between teacher knowledge and teacher practice provides a useful framework for designing professional development that supports effective instruction. They described three types of teacher learning and their relationship to changes in teacher practice. The first, and perhaps most common, is *knowledge-for-practice*. In this model of teacher learning, "experts" generate knowledge about research-validated strategies; teachers consume that knowledge, and teachers are then expected to implement the strategies without attention to their individual contexts. The second conceptualization is *knowledge-in-practice*. From this perspective, teacher knowledge is generated by the teacher engaging in the act of teaching or learning by doing and reflecting on their teaching. Teacher learning from this perspective often occurs as collective inquiry among teachers but does not rely on externally validated research-based strategies. The third conceptualization is *knowledge-of-practice*. From this perspective, teachers and "outsiders" collectively generate knowledge, connecting that knowledge to individual classrooms and broader communities. Learning from this perspective involves teachers and other members of the learning community "challenging their own assumptions; identifying salient issues of practice; posing problems; studying their own students, classrooms, and schools; constructing and reconstructing curriculum; and taking on roles of leadership and activism in efforts to transform classrooms, schools, and societies" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 278).

Special education administrators can support professional development from knowledge-in-practice or knowledge-of-practice perspectives by assisting learning communities or communities of practice in their schools. Supovitz and Christman (2005) recommended several steps that can facilitate effective communities of practice. They suggested that school and district leaders must focus learning communities on instruction by:

Providing communities with tools for systematic inquiry into the relationships between teaching and student learning. Leaders themselves need a firm knowledge base about how effective instructional communities work—including some understanding of the types of collegial relationships that sustain them and the kinds of group practices that result in improved teaching and learning. (p. 650)

Additionally, they suggested that leaders must support these communities by providing consistent opportunities for collaboration through protecting time for conversations about instructional practices and providing opportunities for professional development activities that focus on collaboration.

Supporting communities of practice frequently requires teacher empowerment. Empowered teachers feel supported in their efforts to make decisions, problem-solve, and take risks through implementing innovative practices. Short and Greer (2002) discussed six issues for educational leaders to address in supporting teacher empowerment. These include: (1) assisting teachers in developing an understanding of empowerment through reading and discussion; (2) promoting a risk-taking environment and encouraging innovation; (3) creating shared decision-making opportunities; (4) developing teachers' problem-solving skills and conflict management skills; (5) building trust and communication; and (6) giving up control.

Clearly, instructional leadership on the part of special education administrators necessitates effective collaboration with principals. The standards-based movement and the call for greater access to the general education curriculum for multicultural students with disabilities demand that special education and general education leaders share responsibility for instructional leadership. Special education administrators must promote collaboration between special education and general education teachers, as well as administration, to ensure access to the general education curriculum (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003).

In *Principals and Special Education: The Critical Role of School Leaders*, DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) described the critical roles principals can assume in facilitating success for learners with disabilities. The support of principals may influence the extent to which both special education and general education teachers implement evidence-based practices, as well as special education teacher retention. Principals, however, often lack knowledge and skills related to special education. In one study of the principalship, principals identified assistance with implementing special education programs as their greatest need (see DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Special education administrators must advocate for and engage in professional development activities that increase principals' knowledge and skills related to multicultural students with disabilities. In addition, they must encourage shared visions in schools and design communities of practice that bring general and special educators together to improve teaching and learning and empower all learners.

Moving From Rules-Driven to Results-Driven Systems

Within the NCLB Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, there is a greater focus and emphasis on outcomes-based education. Previously, special education administrators were held accountable for ensuring the rights of multicultural students with disabilities and following the legal procedures involved in evaluation and placement. Currently, however, accountability has been expanded to include ensuring that multicultural students with disabilities are making adequate yearly progress just like students without disabilities. This appears to alter the role of special education administrators by making their job responsibility of curriculum development and monitoring more of a focus as well as increasing the need for administrators to work closely with special educators in their district to ensure that students are making progress. Since this is a relatively new process, special education administrators are still trying to determine the best ways to assist their special

educators as well as the best ways to assist multicultural students with disabilities. According to Marsh (2000), "[T]he system focus on high student performance standards and high stakes assessment that matters to both the school and the student is still being developed. Many issues still abound: should the standards be defined at the local level, should they be the same for all students, and should they have high stakes consequences for the school and/or the student?" (p. 131) The debate continues at federal, state, and local levels causing much confusion and frustration for those administrators who face possible consequences if their students do not make sufficient progress. An additional dilemma for special education administrators is the conflict between the individualized nature of special education programming and the standardized nature of the NCLB Act.

The traditional premise behind special education is to provide an education suited for each student by creating an individualized education plan that can be carried out to assist the student in his/her academic and/or social need(s) through goals and objectives and to provide related services that allow him/her to be on equal academic footing. Nevertheless, the NCLB Act requires standardized testing in reading, math, language arts, and science to ascertain if a school is successful. School systems are inquiring about what can be done for students with special needs so that they can meet the standards by the start of the 2013-14 school-year. The allowance for alternative assessment gives special education administrators another avenue for assessing students with more severe cognitive deficits.

However, with more and more schools not meeting AYP within the special education subgroup, special education administrators may feel pressure from district level administration to try to include as many multicultural students with disabilities in the alternative assessment as possible. These administrators may also need to explain to parents, teachers, and multicultural students with disabilities the impact that the NCLB Act has on them. Each of these groups should understand the impact of standards and the process of accountability testing. The least restrictive environment (LRE) is still important through IDEIA 2004 although LRE may have unintended consequences for students placed in general education classes. For multicultural students with disabilities to be able to demonstrate proficiency on standardized assessments and meet the rigorous academic standards at their grade levels, IEP teams may feel that removal from the general education setting and more intensive services are necessary. In some cases, IEP teams may feel that the more restrictive environment offers more concentrated academic instruction to assist students in meeting grade level educational standards. This disparity between the provisions and requirements of IDEIA 2004 and the accountability testing process and consequences could place special education administrators in awkward positions. The critical question is: How do we ensure that multicultural students with disabilities receive appropriate services in the least restrictive environment and still make AYP as defined through the NCLB Act? As it appears, this question will continue to be discussed and debated as the educational system approaches the 2013 deadline for all students to meet standards.

Leadership Roles in Managing Change

Leadership entails unique behaviors for each set of circumstances in the educational environment. Administrators have traditionally assumed multiple roles through their position, such as planning and directing programs, leading instruction, supervising faculty and staff, and managing the day-to-day activities within their buildings. However,

Rountree and Marsh (1997) maintain that "shifting policies and an overwhelming increase in the rate of change have expanded leadership roles" (p. 16). Superintendents, special education administrators, personnel directors, curriculum directors, finance directors, and principals all have unique sets of behaviors with regards to leadership. According to Sage and Burrello (1994), "the special educator as leader must now portray programs as inclusive, child-centered, demonstrating instructional effectiveness, and projecting a positive image concerning the education of all students" (p. 256). In addition to these skills and requirements, the special education administrator must possess general administrative skills required of other district level administrators, such as budgeting; recruiting and supervising faculty and staff; and completing reports required by local, state, and federal education agencies. Coupled with these skills and requirements is the need for special education administrators to maintain ongoing communication with all stakeholders, including faculty and staff, other administrators, parents, students, legislators, and community members. This kind of communication entails talking with community members as well as parents and advocates. It requires demonstrating the relationship between education and training of multicultural students with disabilities and the post-school contributions of students to their community. In addition, this open communication can provide a spring board for creating policy and discussing issues surrounding current laws and practice.

One of the major roles of the special education administrator has been to provide guidance and assistance to school personnel for matters related to instructing multicultural students with disabilities, both within separate settings and general education classes. The NCLB and IDEIA are currently posing unique challenges for special education administrators as they plan and administer quality special education programs. There are skills which are essential in order for special education programs to be managed both efficiently and effectively. Most importantly, administrators must: (a) have effective communication skills; (b) work with building-level administrators to develop collaborative programs with outside agency representatives, state and federal officials, parents, and legal advocates; (c) articulate their school districts and special education programs' goals in order to help gain and maintain support for their programs; (d) demonstrate working knowledge of legal mandates and requirements to effectively conduct ongoing reviews of their districts' compliance; and (e) have broad knowledge of special education instructional techniques and keep up with new developments in the field (Osbourne, DiMattia & Curran, 1993).

There are other contextual factors that continue to influence the role of the special education administrator, such as the organizational structure and support of schools and districts as well as the culture of school districts. These factors exert great influence on special educators in schools and often are affected by the district administration. Special education administrators must consider these contextual factors in all aspects of their roles and responsibilities. As times change, so do organizational structures and supports. Leaders must look into planning, day-to-day management, communication among all personnel, and program evaluation (Sage & Burrello, 1994). While special education administrators do not always individually determine how these contextual factors will operate, they must be cognizant of what goes on in all areas. For example, the school board or district superintendent may decide what procedures should be used for program evaluation, and then the special education administrator would

implement those procedures. The chief financial officer for the district may decide on the annual budget for special education programs, and then the special education administrator would manage those funds and plan accordingly. Since IDEIA has changed how special education funds can be used, more collaboration and consultation are required between the special education administrator and other personnel to determine the use of federal monies typically earmarked for special education.

Sage and Burrello (1994) noted that district organizations should assist special education programs to:

- 1) Provide support and assistance to regular education personnel to help them teach and organize instructional services for multicultural students with disabilities and others with special needs;
- 2) Establish direct services that accommodate the unique learning and behavioral needs of students in the least restrictive environment;
- 3) Organize building-based team efforts of parents, students, and professionals for program planning and placement of students;
- 4) Initiate the provision of alternative settings and services at the building and district levels;
- 5) Provide for the evaluation of students' progress and for decision points at which students can exit various programs and services;
- 6) Provide for professional staff development to increase teacher and administrator competencies;
- 7) Develop a field-based action research program that tests the application of basic learning principles to instruction, behavior management, and other factors that affect the mental health of students, parents, and professionals;
- 8) Negotiate to obtain the participation of other state and community agencies in the support of instructional programs, mental health services for children, and social welfare services for parents and children;
- 9) Provide direct consultative services to parents and students to assist them in becoming better participants in the educational planning process;
- 10) Apply criteria derived from considerations of process and least restrictive environment to all individual educational planning and placement alternatives developed at the building or district levels. (pp. 160-161)

The supports within the organization that relate directly to special education are often developed, monitored, and evaluated by special education administrators. Even though these basic supports may remain the same, the implementation and focus of each of them may change due to the current focus on outcomes-based education.

When analyzing the culture of a school or school district, values and morals tend to be extremely influential (Rountree & Marsh, 1997). The relationships among all personnel contribute greatly to the culture within each school or district. Special education administrators have a direct effect on the culture as it relates to special education; their ability to communicate with personnel as well as their leadership skills can have either a positive or negative effect on this culture. With the shift in focus to accountability for outcomes and the confusion surrounding the implementation of NCLB and IDEIA, special education administrators must be more proactive in the planning, implementation, and communication of special education programs and procedures.

The shortage and high attrition rate of special educators may continue to impact the culture of the school, and vice versa. Therefore, special education administrators will continue to see an increase in their need to attract and retain quality special educators. Clearly, recruiting and retaining "highly qualified" personnel will continue to be a dilemma for special education administrators, especially in light of the new statutory requirements. Special education administrators must agree that all students deserve an education with teachers who are proficient in content areas; however, the concern is how to attract and retain those teachers. According to Osbourne et al. (1993), the "recruitment of special education staff is probably the single most important aspect of special education administration. Quality programs cannot exist without quality faculty" (p.42). In a time when there is already a shortage of special education teachers, the requirements in IDEIA could pose an additional issue for special education administrators.

Under NCLB and IDEIA, all teachers of core academic subjects (e.g., English, reading/language arts, math, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts as determined by the state, history, and geography) must be deemed "highly qualified" in their content areas. For special educators who teach multiple subjects, these requirements could seem rather daunting. Special education administrators must think "outside the box" as much as the regulations will allow when helping these special educators to obtain "highly qualified" status. Each state will be different in its requirements for proving the "highly qualified" status. These administrators will need to be well-versed in their state's regulations as well as remain aware of opportunities available for their special educators to attain this status.

A related issue is how best to utilize paraprofessionals serving students with special needs. Paraprofessionals hired after January 8, 2002 and working in a program supported with Title I funds must have a high school diploma and must have completed a minimum of two years of study (60 semester hours) at an institution of higher education; have an associate's or higher degree; or meet a rigorous standard of quality demonstrated on a state test. Existing paraprofessionals hired prior to January 8, 2002 and working in a program supported with Title I funds must meet the requirements listed above no later than January 8, 2006. Again, thinking outside the box may assist special education administrators in developing effective professional development programs for paraprofessionals. Clearly, providing regular training, as well as collaborating and programming with local and state colleges and universities, can help to provide paraprofessionals with the certification they need.

Conclusion

It is imperative for special education administrators, and all administrators, to adapt to the changing demographic and educational environments. The field of special education has changed dramatically in the last three decades, and administrators can and should be leaders of the continued evolution of special education. One useful organizing framework for focusing the work is Crockett's (2002) "star model." The emphasis on five components of special education administration—ethical practice, individual consideration, equity for all students, effective programming, and productive partnerships—should guide administrators' work. Clearly, one major influence on the field of education generally is the movement away from process to outcomes, embodied in the standards movement. Special education administrators must understand this change in focus and adapt their practice to it.

This overarching change in education has posed challenges for all educators, and in particular, for special education administrators. The field continues to struggle with the balance between providing an equitable education for all students and maintaining the excellence of programs using limited resources. In order to accomplish the provision of excellent and equitable programs in the context of standards-based education, multiple areas of administrative practice must be addressed. The concept of learning communities in schools is one such change in focus that promises to improve educational practice. A conscious effort to bring all stakeholders together and to work toward common goals may provide the basis for improvement. In line with developing community, school administrators must bridge the divide between general education and special education. Learning communities must include students, parents, educators, and community members.

The environment of school accountability has continued to force special education administrators to explore all methods of determining student progress. Maintaining current information about the accountability assessments that policymakers are proposing and enacting will assist educators in meeting those mandates. Reviewing proposals, such as the value-added approach, allows special education administrators to incorporate their voice into the discussion in a meaningful way. In addition, it is incumbent on special education administrators to perform as instructional leaders. The pull of other duties, such as legal issues, must be addressed in a manner that allows a leadership role to emerge. Instructional leaders have to assist their staff in the implementation of evidence-based practices. The role of an instructional leader encompasses an up-to-date knowledge of professional development and adult learning. Educators will improve their implementation of evidence-based practices when the delivery of professional development takes into account their unique learning needs. As instructional leaders, special education administrators must also work to empower teachers so that all persons working with students feel a sense of competence.

Along with the imperatives discussed above are some challenges to special education administrators currently and in the future. Special education administrators must develop and practice highly effective communication skills. We believe effective partnerships are built on communication. The issue of how services will be delivered to multicultural students with disabilities is also a challenge that faces special education administrators. Educating students in the least restrictive environment is a deceptively simple proposition. The decision-making and collaborative processes that are involved are nuanced and require a highly effective administrator. Finally, the mandate included in the NCLB legislation stipulating that all teachers be "highly qualified" is currently, and will be in the future, a challenge. The definition of what constitutes a highly qualified special education teacher is hotly debated and even with an agreed upon definition will be an issue given special education teacher shortages. While special education administration has undergone dramatic changes in beliefs and practices in the last three decades, the potential for having a significant impact on multicultural students with disabilities remains key to those who hold these positions.

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Beyond Narrow Confines: Special Education Leadership for Ethnically Diverse Urban Learners

Gathogo Mukuria and Festus E. Obiakor

Human frailties exist in everyone. There are some things that we know and some that we do not know (Stephens & Nieberding, 2003). However, when the lack of knowledge is used to harm others or when it falls short of expected criteria, this failure becomes more than just a human weakness. In educational leadership contexts, such a failure could have far-reaching, devastating effects on others. Schools are one setting where harm can be the unintended result of not knowing. This unwillingness or inability to know seems critical today because of the dynamic change that is now impacting schools in the United States and because of the emerging global economy and ongoing demographic shifts in power and paradigm. What is perceived as “knowledge” and who determines what “knowledge” is valued provides an additional uncertainty. No doubt, advances in technology as well as skills and abilities demanded by businesses and industries of the future have all combined to render obsolete the way schools have been administered in the past (Freire, 2000). As school reform programs are instituted, the social and political dimensions of those reforms have tended to complicate the debate for what and for whom schools have been designed (Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith, 2003).

Urban school building administrators are aware of sociocultural dynamics that affect today's urban schools, but they seem to lack the will to make the necessary changes that could buttress programmatic stability and integrity. For some, the debate focuses on the issue of equity in the pursuit of educational excellence for all children (Freire, 2000; Monkman, Ronald, & The'ame'ne, 2005; Reay, 2004). For others, the debate centers on the preparation of a competitive labor force or service industry as well as the socioeconomic stratification that comes with it (Gagnon, 1995). These debates permeate current discussions on special education leadership in urban schools. In more concrete fashion, the debates address issues tied to teacher preparation, quality of teachers, and best practices as well as equity in school finance and resource allocation. Implicitly tied to these issues are new standards and accountability methods, school safety

issues, and curricula—all of which impact teachers, parents, students, taxpayers, and school leaders. In this article, we focus on special education leadership for ethnically diverse urban schools.

Urban School Environments and Ethnically Diverse Learners

Urban schools serve a diverse student population that includes African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and “poor” European Americans. The school size and location and the composition of student population play major parts in determining learning outcomes of a particular school (Mukuria, 2002; Obiakor, Obi, & Algozzine, 2001). About two decades ago, the Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching (1988) described many urban schools as having a large, diverse population and being located in “poor” neighborhoods. This Commission's report indicated that many schools lacked purpose, coherence, and unifying culture and that they had neglected buildings that gave them a negative appearance. In addition, these schools lacked meaningful instructional programs and regular routines as well as a strong sense of community. As a result, they demonstrated the inability to establish a consensus on a unifying culture which, to a large extent, leads to disciplinary problems.

Urban environmental risks frequently result in high numbers of students identified as needing special education services. In addition, the majority of urban students with disabilities are poor (Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith, 2003). Many come from dysfunctional homes and are at risk of being placed in juvenile justice programs. Inevitably, these factors place these students at a high risk for future educational failure. The combination of the prevailing conditions in the urban areas places an almost impenetrable barrier between urban children/youth and academic success. For example, some studies (see Tillman & Johnson, 2003) suggest that as many as one-half of students identified as having emotional/behavioral disorders are victims of physical or sexual abuse. Substantial numbers of such students have grown up in families involved in alcohol and substance abuse. Nearly 50% are from poor, often single parent homes. The multiple and cumulative needs of poor children with disabilities in the nation's urban areas present formidable challenges that should be addressed (see Ferguson et al., 2003).

The marginalization of funding urban schools through allocation of resources has been in existence since the Great Depression (Anyon, 1997). Many urban schools in the United States are funded at lower rate than their suburban counterparts in spite of a recent influx of state funds to shore up failing urban systems. Lower levels of funding over an extended period of time have led to increased class size, lack of sufficient books and materials, shortages of certified teachers, and the deterioration of school buildings (Kozol, 1991). The magnitude of these problems should be of great concern taking into account that urban schools comprise 4% of the American school districts but serve more than 44% of the nation's students (Ferguson et al., 2003).

Research on the principalship suggests that the leadership roles that principals adopt do make a difference in determining students' outcomes (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Mukuria, 2002; Seyfarth, 1999). Clearly, the success of any improvement efforts depends on the active leadership of a school administration. In relationship to the improvement of educational programs in any school setting, the superintendent's willingness and ability to relate with principals, teachers, and community members seem to make a difference in the district's culture

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of learning (see Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). Since the principal plays the critical roles of setting the tone and establishing school climate and culture, it is critical to understand the complex factors that influence urban schools including the education of learners with special needs. The need to provide services and programs that enable students with special needs to maximize their highest potential is critical because of the nature of problems confronting urban learners (Obiakor, Utley, & Rotatori, 2003; Obiakor & Utley, 2004). It is of paramount importance for administrators and teachers to thoroughly understand these problems so that they can meet the needs of every child including those with special needs because they are the most vulnerable.

Identification and Referrals of Urban Learners: Endemic Problems Confronting Special Education Leadership

There is a popular African adage that "One does not start to climb a tree from the top but from the bottom." A logical extension is that the critical steps of identification and referral of students greatly influence how special education is perceived and led in urban schools. When identification and referral are poorly and prejudicially done, the other processes of assessment, categorization, labeling, placement, and instruction usually produce prejudicial results (Mukuria & Obiakor, 2004). As it appears, referrals are initiated when a parent, teacher, or other related professionals complete a referral form, which stipulates the magnitude and duration of the problem the child is having (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2005). However, the moment a student is erroneously identified as having a disability, the child receives a stigma, difficult to erase which, to a large measure, ruins the rest of his/her life. This is the main reason why school principals and teachers must be involved in the identification process, educated on multicultural perspectives, and exposed to instructional challenges of learners from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. Such an involvement would provide school personnel with a deeper understanding of special needs students and the dynamics that influence how they learn and behave (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Rotatori & Obi, 1999). For instance, Losen (2002) noted that educators should take prereferral intervention seriously to minimize the flow of inappropriate special education referrals for students from CLD backgrounds. During the prereferral stage, the teacher assistant or multidisciplinary team meets to discuss general educators' concerns about a student. The team suggests pertinent strategies that teachers might implement within the general education classroom before the student can be considered for referral for special education services. Parents, principals, and other professionals should play a more proactive role during the prereferral process. Monitoring of prereferral success rates, including data collection on race and ethnicity, will keep the principal informed about whether classroom interventions are culturally sensitive and effective for *all* learners.

It is common knowledge that many teachers and principals do not know how to handle special needs students because of their feeling of incompetence or downright incompetence. Teachers and principals do not get more than one introductory course in special education during preservice preparation. Surprisingly, although some schools of education enroll more than a token number of ethnically diverse students, 95% of the teachers in the United States are European Americans (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). In addition, the numbers of ethnically diverse principals or superintendents are sadly low (Swartz, 2003). It is no surprise that the misidentification of students

from ethnically diverse backgrounds has continued to be pervasive and persistent. Teacher preparation, cultural sensitivity, understanding of and exposure to behaviors of diverse cultures can tremendously minimize, if not eliminate, personal bias that is intertwined with misidentification and misreferral. Unless learners are correctly identified, they will be improperly placed, and the instruction they will receive will not be congruent with their educational needs and abilities. While increasing the number of principals from ethnically diverse groups might not be the panacea, one cannot teach what he/she does not know. Shared cultural values might reduce mistrust and motivate professionals to rethink what they do and how they do what they do in urban schools.

Leading the Way through Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

That good leaders advocate for nondiscriminatory assessment is one of the basic tenets delineated in the 1997 Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) reauthorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). Diagnosticians, school psychologists, special and general educators, speech pathologists, and other related service personnel should assess students' attributes, strengths and weaknesses with an ultimate degree of professionalism. As currently administered, special education leads culturally and linguistically different students to be marginalized, overidentified, and therefore, overrepresented and placed in special education when the actual problem may be differences in culture or language, and not in disabilities (Winzer & Mazurek, 1998). Assessment in special education should be viewed as a multifaceted process that should take place in a number of contexts (Obiakor, 2001).

Much of the controversy surrounding special education in the past has been focused on the use of standardized tests (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; McLoughlin & Lewis, 2005). There is a plethora of evidence to show that the traditional assessment process is biased against individuals whose gender, race, ethnic background, culture, religion or disability excludes them from receiving services or meaningful education equal to that of the dominant group in the mainstream Anglo-culture (Obiakor, 2001; Obiakor & Schwenn, 1996; Walpole, McDonough, Bauer, Gibson, Kanyi, & Toliver, 2005). Some contentious issues in assessment focus on the technical adequacy of assessment tools. Issues of lack of validity and reliability continue to be problematic for persons from different cultural backgrounds (Obiakor, 2000). Validity addresses whether the test measures what it is designed to measure while reliability shows the consistency of the test. All too often, too much weight is placed on the use of intelligence tests. These tests are broad, and their norms usually represent populations from the upper socioeconomic status, which are predominantly European Americans. These tests fail to measure the strengths and weaknesses of individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. To a large measure, these tests assume that all learners have the same experiences in spite of racial, cultural, learning, behavioral, and economic differences (Mukuria & Obiakor, 2004; Obiakor, 2001; Obiakor & Ford, 2002). Clearly, these tests are biased and discriminatory, and the assumption that all children have similar backgrounds and experiences seems erroneous, misleading, and socially unacceptable. In addition, adolescents with CLD backgrounds who experience social inequality in economic and societal mobilities feel that education will have little relevance to their future lives and occupational pursuits. Structural and educational barriers in American society have led students from CLD backgrounds to

develop oppositional identities around achievement, school, and whatever is perceived to be European American. Because of such oppositional attitudes and behaviors, many students are categorized, labeled, and placed in classrooms for students with emotional/behavioral disorders (Ford, 1992).

IDEIA (2004) requires that assessment considers the dominant language of students. Determining which language is dominant is sometimes difficult; a student may be tested in his or her native language and in English. There are times when a student's dominant conversational language differs from his/her dominant language (Baca & Cervantes, 1998; Ortiz & Yates, 2001). It is critical for diagnosticians and related professionals to be aware that test items could be more familiar to students in one culture than another and check the reliability and validity ratings of instruments they intend to utilize with CLD students (Obiakor & Schwenn, 1996). Assessment information gathered from multiple sources such as behavioral checklists, observations, student interviews, and parent interviews is susceptible to interviewer bias; teams that make educational decisions must consider this possibility. Gathering different kinds of information (e.g., student work samples and assessments) from multiple sources is a best practice in culturally sensitive assessment (Obiakor, 2001). Using one person or test score for special education eligibility decisions is not only inappropriate but also illegal (see IDEA, 1997).

Using Good Leadership to Build Culturally Responsive Environments

Although IDEA (1997) required school boards to provide each student with a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, it offered little guidance in defining what may be considered appropriate. Many educators interpret least restrictive environment to be the general classroom where special needs students are educated with nondisabled peers to their optimal potential. They may be educated outside the general classroom only when multiple interventions within the general education classroom have been tried for an extended duration without success (Bateman & Bateman, 2002). The removal of students from the general education classroom is seldom justified irrespective of the severity of disability or how disruptive the student's behavior is to others (Lipsky & Garner, 1995). Sometimes, CLD urban students are removed from general education classrooms because they look, act, and speak differently (Obiakor, 2001). Educational outcomes improve among these students when educators adapt their practices accordingly (Wilder, Jackson, & Smith, 2002).

There is a reciprocal interaction between good academic performance and good behavior. Cartledge and Milburn (1995) indicated that academic and social behaviors are linked; they do not occur in isolation in the classroom. Principals are supposed to be instructional leaders (Seyfarth, 1999). This calls for an understanding of the curriculum and effective teaching techniques that would address educational needs of all learners. In order for teaching and learning to take place, the school environment must be conducive to learning and safe for all. Principals should set the tone by word and deed and by articulating the school mission and expectations (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Because of the diverse composition of student populations in urban schools, school administrators should be cognizant of the fact that in order to adequately address the educational needs of all students, instruction should be delivered using divergent techniques that focus on problem-solving. The instructional methods should be congruent

with the learning styles of individual students and their interests. School leaders should make sure that teaching focuses on courses that address multidimensional problems that confront atypical students and enable them to challenge learners in their classrooms, irrespective of their linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Obi & Obiakor, 2001; Sinha, Payne, & Cook, 2005). Since every learner is unique, teachers must learn how to vary and modify their teaching methods. Unless urban administrators and their teachers are aware of this fact, schools in urban areas will continue to be chaotic.

It is important to know that the school principal is at the very heart of school improvement (Cunningham & Cordiero, 2006; Donaldson, 2001; Lunenberg and Ornstein 2004). However, there appears to be a yawning gap between what principals are expected to do and how they are actually trained. One cannot implement what he or she does not know or give what he or she does not have! Swartz (2003) reiterated that over 90% of teachers in the United States are European Americans. When most of the European Americans enter urban schools for fieldwork and later for paid positions, they have little or no awareness of multicultural perspectives because many of them have been educated in schools that are monocultural and monolingual in character. In turn, this situation creates a disconnect between ethnically diverse students and teachers. Many of these teachers find themselves teaching in unfamiliar territories of urban schools and communities. Their perceptions of these communities are largely media-based and exogenous; they typically have low expectations and may have conscious or unconscious racist assumptions about the supposed deficiencies of ethnically diverse urban children. In this frame of mind, "success" and "urban schools" are oxymoronic, with success perceived as a deranged phenomenon achieved through meritocracy that says "if only individuals would try harder to do better!" The result of this perspective is that failure may evoke a "blame the victim" response.

For many in urban schools, sometimes language is not an issue, but culture is. For instance, if an ethnically diverse student with an emotional disorder is involved in a gang, the culture of the gang will directly clash with the school culture. In such a case, the student is likely to be disciplined and unsuccessful in school unless a social worker or organized gang prevention or removal program is initiated for the student. In addition, poverty may impede a student's educational progress if the student lacks school supplies or access to technology. Poverty can negatively affect the life of any student, regardless of race or ethnicity (Hodgkinson, 1995). Also, the culture taught at home, and the culture valued at school may not be congruent. Principals and school personnel should be aware of the conflicts between the student's home teachings and those of the school and include social skills and the work environment (for secondary school level students) into the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For example, Hispanic students tend to be more comfortable with a cooperative interaction style than with the more prevalent competitive style of classroom interactions (Carraquillo, 1991). They may feel more comfortable in close physical contact with others, experiencing frequent emotional expressions, and may interpret a lack of such contact as a rejection by the teacher (Lynch & Hanson, 1992). On the other hand, some learners from CLD backgrounds are taught to avoid direct eye contact with adults as a sign of respect; this is sometimes problematic for mainstream teachers and principals. For some students, punctuality to classes or appointments is not an issue, which puts them at a disadvantage in a school environment where being

on time is greatly valued and constantly reinforced while a relaxed concept of time is punished. Inevitably, this attitude may also affect the ethnically diverse students' performance on assessments because many standardized tests and school exercises have time limits. Principals and other school personnel must be aware of cultural factors that impinge upon learning and involve diverse urban learners when developing IEPs. Their goal must be to educate all learners (Obiakor, Grant, & Dooley, 2002). There is an urgent need for school leaders to develop multidimensional pedagogical and curricular approaches that open up students' perspectives to critical thinking, knowledge, creativity, and self-awareness. Providing caring environments and using diverse cultural variables to address learning communities as represented in urban populations are critical ingredients that should never be overlooked.

Future Perspectives: Leading Beyond Narrow Confines

Because of the intensive nature of problems that confront urban learners, urban schools need visionary leaders who can lead beyond their narrow confines. These schools need special education administrators and teachers who can constantly design and implement instructional activities at higher levels in all subject areas. For students to be critical thinkers, teachers and administrators need to model thinking that is critical. Clearly, culture plays a role in how one thinks or acts. There is a popular adage in the African Kiswahili language, which translates: *He who ignores his culture is enslaved indeed*. Self-knowledge is a necessary ingredient in life, and becoming aware of self is an ongoing and essential journey for teachers and service providers (Goodwin, 1999). Knowing who one is individually and culturally helps one to consciously design interactions with students. When principals and teachers are consciously thoughtful about their attitudes and expectations for working with parents and families, they tend to collaboratively craft the type of visionary partnership that enhances students' learning (Christine, Leland & Harste, 2005).

Urban schools need innovative administrators and teachers who think of themselves as producers of knowledge, who are aware of diverse backgrounds from which their students come, and avoid dependency on the often monocultural productions of lessons (Obiakor & Wilder, 2003). Such leaders frequently get away from the traditional, mechanical way of teaching and instead use creativity to develop critical instructional questions, along with a wide range of assessments, while constructing materials that are congruent with the student-centered, culturally responsive emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 2000; Obiakor, 2001). Pedagogies that are emancipatory and student-centered, and that build on what students know, are question-driven, use active learning, draw on multiple epistemologies, and use students' own "voices to create curriculum." Curricula used with emancipatory pedagogy is inclusive, culturally sensitive, indigenously voiced and relevant. All these practices call for special education teachers and administrators who are creative planners and learners (Noguera, 2003; Obiakor & Wilder, 2003).

Teachers and administrators of urban schools need to be aware that teaching and learning are inextricably linked. Continuous learning occurs when there is openness to new ideas and experiences (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Obiakor & Wilder, 2003). Being a teacher or an administrator means being a learner. There are many dynamics that drive learning. New ideas and methods of teaching and learning keep on emerging, and administrators should keep abreast with

emerging changes. In addition to expanding core foundational and methodological knowledge, teachers and administrators need to engage in ongoing learning about students' cultures and other group identities. While this is true for all students and for all schools, ongoing learning is more critical in urban schools where the composition of the student population is diverse and continually changing as ethnic compositions of the neighborhood change. An understanding of research on ontological and epistemological variations, world-wide perspectives, and realities can greatly help urban school administrators and teachers develop pedagogies congruent to student identities (Gay, 2001; Nobles, 1986; Swartz, 2003). For instance, individualistic orientation of the dominant culture is prevalent in conventional classrooms where there are serialized turn-taking, extensive teacher talk, one-way transmission of content, and rote responding through recall. A group-based recall, reflecting the ontologies and epistemologies of Latino and African American cultures, can be seen in family-centered or people-centered classrooms (see Gay, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Clearly, there are multidimensional ways of communication, minimized teacher talk, critical questioning, active rather than passive learning, and relevant activities such as drama reading, small group cooperative learning, and student-led discussion; all of which require and draw on students' sense of collective responsibility. Administrators and teachers in urban schools must be willing to try new experiences and new methods of teaching. To meet the ever-emerging challenges in urban schools, they must be open-minded to get away from the traditional instructional methods of teaching to meet the diverse educational needs of urban learners. Administrators and other school personnel must endeavor to create an atmosphere where knowledge exists as something that is both individually owned and community-owned at the same time. Surely, the two feed off each other. A particular student's own knowledge contributes to the body of knowledge that exists in a classroom as a whole. In this manner, the conceptualization of ideas and topics presented are interrelated and interdependent rather than isolated and independent. In addition, engaging students in ongoing conversations about difficult social and academic issues can make a difference in how learners see themselves and how they judge their ability to succeed (Christine et al., 2005).

It is important for urban school leaders to understand that true wisdom begins when an individual realizes how much he/she does not know. This truism brings to mind the many uninformed and ill-prepared school administrators who are not well-versed with current "best practices," or who are otherwise "behind the times." There is a great need for principals and teachers to have professional development by attending conferences and seminars. Improving principals' and teachers' knowledge is addressed through district or school sponsored professional development sessions and graduate continuing education, for which there is often ample opportunity. Sometimes, statewide professional organizations that provide conferences for building principals offer special education content through workshops or conferences. During such conferences, instruction is rarely offered in a systematic way that is need-based. Valesky and Hirth (1992) lamented that special education is kept in the periphery when compared to other areas in education. Courses that are offered by professional organizations for a day or two often touch special education issues on the surface, especially on legal issues, and then the rest of the time is spent on other matters pertaining to general

education. Moreover, special education is treated inadequately, if at all, in the majority of principal preparation programs (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). While opportunities like those provided during workshops and by professional organizations are certainly helpful, more content and time are critical to providing effective leadership in special education in urban schools.

Finally, collaboration-based leadership is the key ingredient without which very little can be achieved in any school setting. Across the nation, demands for higher and greater accountability for public performance have drawn administrators, teachers, parents, and community organizations into new innovative collaborative networks. The salient target of these partnerships is the improvement in school outcomes for all youths, including those with special needs. The recent trend toward systematic collaboration by the public educational system focuses on concentrated efforts by all shareholders to help ensure excellence in educational programming for all youth (Obiakor et al., 2002). Connections emphasize the bringing together of students, teachers, and communities in the school to enhance meaningful engagements. Coherence, which is closely related to connections, emphasizes the bringing together of a set of interrelated programs that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and that are pursued over a sustained period. Both instructional coherence and school coherence are critical. The former has to do with bringing together in some meaningful way the various components of teaching and learning while the latter has to do with providing necessary structures and programs that support teaching and learning. Clearly, shared decision-making within site-based managed schools and community partnerships is advocated as an important component of restructured schools that optimizes educational service delivery for learners (Banks, 1997; Hatch, 1998). The web of relationships that stands out in communities is different in kind than those found in corporations, banks, and other formal organizations. They are more special, meaningful, and personalized, and they result from the quality of connectedness that has moral overtones. In addition, because of these overtones, members feel a special sense of obligation to look out for each other. Tomorrow's administrators and personnel in urban settings must initiate collaborative partnerships with the community to build cohesiveness and eliminate problems of race and class and concentrate on common issues related to safety and learning within the school environment. In sum, there is dire need for a change in the way urban school educators and administrators are prepared if they expect to educate all children.

Conclusion

This article focused on ways to build great special education leadership for ethnically diverse urban learners. We cannot build such leadership without preparation. Clearly, if administrators and teachers are not properly prepared, they cannot deliver instructions to all learners. Therefore, it is imperative that special education administrators in urban schools be adequately prepared to reduce misidentification, miscategorization, misassessment, and misplacement of special needs students. Since many urban students are CLD learners, teacher education programs must expose all their future teachers to multicultural courses and experiences. In addition, more student teachers from ethnically diverse groups must be admitted and retained in these programs. There are very few courses, apart from the "Introduction to Special Education," that are offered to preservice teachers and

administrators (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). This means that when they graduate, they have no idea of how to deal with special needs students, let alone the urban population. This is a grave concern. While nationally the buzz word is inclusion, the reality of the matter is that teachers and school leaders are ill-equipped to teach special needs students in urban schools. Principals are neither adequately prepared to handle special needs students nor are they aware of the conditions and student populations of urban schools. They find themselves in an unfamiliar territory of a cultural nightmare when they go to urban schools for the first time. Many can be likened to soldiers fighting in unknown territory! Moreover, there are few principals from ethnically diverse groups, a situation that needs to be rectified. An exposure to courses pertaining to special needs learners and multicultural experiences in urban schools could improve knowledge in teaching special needs learners. Moreover, by taking special education courses, administrators could take more positive roles in the assessment process and in the distribution of special education resources. In addition, more informed principals are likely to lobby for more funds for their school and also play the role of advocates for urban schools and students with special needs.

Challenges posed by urban schools call for administrators and teachers who are properly prepared and experienced in dealing with CLD populations. To adequately serve all students, principals should be exposed to and have experiences in multicultural aspects of special education and how they impinge on learning in urban schools. In addition, principals should have a thorough knowledge of identification and referral strategies, nondiscriminatory evaluation, free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, multidimensional instructional strategies, and professional development collaboration needed to solve problems confronting urban learners. We need new urban school principals and leaders who are creatively ready to meet the diverse needs of urban students with exceptionalities. If we truly want to leave no child behind, drastic actions must be instituted to rectify the way principals and teachers in urban schools are prepared. Otherwise, many urban school learners both in general and special education will be left behind.

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The Role of Administrators in Paraprofessional Supervision to Support Ethnic Minority Students with Special Needs

Betty Y. Ashbaker and Jill Morgan

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 provided a clear mandate to school administrators to provide additional training for professional and paraprofessional staff. With its requirement that school districts must ensure that all staff are “highly qualified” for the roles assigned to them, it leaves no room for excuses or prevarication. Of particular note is the definition of highly qualified status for paraprofessional staff working in Title I programs. Although in the past many paraprofessionals have been hired on the basis of only a high school diploma or equivalent, the new requirement is that they have formal post-secondary education or be able to demonstrate their competence through a rigorous assessment approved at state level. This is a Title I requirement, but its wider application to *all* paraprofessionals working in Title I funded programs (and therefore specifically in schoolwide programs) makes it a general concern for educational agencies and programs hiring paraprofessionals.

In addition, the NCLB Act requires that paraprofessionals work under the direction of a teacher or other professional; that is, their work must be supervised. However, this issue of professional supervision is not new. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 stated that paraprofessionals could be used to provide special education and related services as long as they were “adequately trained and supervised.” This requirement for supervision was reiterated in the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) by adding that such use of paraprofessionals must be in line with state regulation and policy. In this article, we discuss the intricacies of the administrator’s role in paraprofessional supervision to support ethnic minority students with special needs.

Supervising the Paraprofessional

NCLB defines a paraprofessional as “an individual who is employed in a preschool, elementary school, or secondary school

providing instructional support” and states the paraprofessional must work under the direct supervision of a teacher. Earlier, Pickett (1986) described paraprofessionals as “the fastest growing yet most under-recognized, under-prepared and therefore, under-utilized category of personnel in the service delivery system” (p.14). Approximately 1.3 million paraprofessionals were working in the U.S. education system in 2002, and that number was predicted to increase at a rate surpassing that of certified teachers by the year 2005 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). As a case in point, recent data from Minnesota suggest that this has indeed happened in at least one state. Between 1988 and 2003, the number of Title I paraprofessionals in Minnesota increased from 3,000 to 5,000; and the number of paraprofessionals working in special education increased from 3,000 to 22,000. This last figure shows a massive seven-fold increase!

Another group of students that accounts for high employment of paraprofessionals and that is also expected to increase disproportionately in the coming years is that of English as a Second Language (ESL) students (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). The number of ESL students directly impacts Title I programs since many of these students are in need of additional help with basic literacy and numeracy and would be considered “disadvantaged”—the major criterion for receiving assistance under Title I of the NCLB Act. For some time now, it has been known that ESL students are disproportionately referred to and identified for special education. The IDEIA now requires states and local school systems to develop policies and procedures to prevent the overidentification of or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of children with disabilities. This provision also calls for educators to record the number of students from minority groups in special education classes and to provide early intervention services for children in groups deemed to be over-represented (Osborne & Russo, 2006). All testing and evaluation materials and procedures must be “selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis” (IDEIA, 2004).

The NCLB Act requires each paraprofessional to work under the direction of a professional educator. The rather obvious corollary of the above cited growth rates therefore is that the increasing numbers of paraprofessionals will lead to an increasing need for professional educators who can provide adequate direction to and supervision of paraprofessionals. This translates into the every day reality of almost every teacher in the United States having responsibility for at least one paraprofessional for at least part of the school day.

Interestingly, many teachers with such responsibilities may even be ignorant of them (Ashbaker & Morgan, 1999b). Consider the teacher at the secondary level who has a student who comes to class accompanied by a paraprofessional because the student needs assistance in reading text or writing notes. This teacher may not consider that there is any real need to “interfere” with what the paraprofessional does, particularly if he/she has been assigned to do it by someone else. Nevertheless, that teacher does have a legal obligation to supervise him/her as part of the professional responsibility for everything that happens in the classroom.

Moreover, on a larger scale, the responsibility for supervision of paraprofessionals lies with school administrators, not just with classroom teachers. Again, this is a responsibility that may be overlooked by administrators, particularly in the case of paraprofessionals hired at the school district level, such as those working in bilingual or ESL programs. Such paraprofessionals often receive their assignments from a supervisor at the school district office and may work with

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students in several schools, making an appearance at scheduled times to work with students but otherwise having little contact with school faculty. They may also have the most contact with parents, an area of particular sensitivity especially when such contact occurs in a language that the teacher and administrator may not speak. As we have previously stated:

School administrators and their staff are largely unaware of exactly what she [the bilingual paraprofessional] does, how she interacts with the students, or what she tells parents. And yet, it is precisely those administrators and teachers who are legally responsible for the students. A safety net of support and advocacy should be put into place to legally protect the school and [the bilingual paraprofessional], and to ensure a coordinated program of services for the students. (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2000a, p.55)

Although these comments were made in relation to bilingual paraprofessionals not hired through the school, they apply equally to all paraprofessionals. The administrator remains the ultimate supervisor of paraprofessionals and the person with overall responsibility for what happens in the school (Ashbaker & Morgan, 1999a). Requirements that paraprofessionals are appropriately trained and supervised are required by federal legislation, but it is up to school level administrators and teachers to see that supervision is conducted.

Paraprofessional Supervision: Clarification and Meaning

Almost a decade after the enactment of IDEA, no real federal definition of supervision has emerged. As indicated, NCLB noted that paraprofessionals should work “under the direction” of a professional. Title I non-regulatory guidance provided the following non-binding clarification:

A paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of a teacher if (1) the teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carries out, and evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working, and (2) the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 10).

By any standard, this appears to be a scant definition of the supervising teacher's role in planning the paraprofessional's work, evaluating the paraprofessional's students (with no mention of evaluating the paraprofessional) and keeping the paraprofessional close at hand.

An increasing number of due process hearings, court cases, and Office of Civil Rights (OCR) opinions have focused on the question of whether paraprofessionals have been adequately trained and supervised. The adequacy of training for assigned roles has received noticeably more attention than adequacy of supervision. When supervision has been the major focus of cases, more attention seems to have been given to whether there has been any supervision at all rather than the nature or quality of it (Ashbaker & Minney, 2005).

So far, we have considered what constitutes appropriate levels of supervision for paraprofessionals according to government sources. Several authors (e.g., French & Pickett, 1997; Morgan, 1998; Morgan, Ashbaker, & Roberts, 2000) have made recommendations on what constitutes the teacher's supervisory role. According to Pickett and Safarik (as cited in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997), the supervising teacher has tremendous responsibilities with regard to paraprofessionals, namely:

1. Participating in the hiring of the paraprofessional for whom he/she will be responsible;
2. Informing family and student of the frequency and duration of paraprofessional services as well as the extent of supervision;
3. Reviewing each paraprofessional's performance at least weekly;
4. Delegating specific tasks to the paraprofessional while retaining legal and ethical responsibility for all services provided or omitted;
5. Signing all formal documents, e.g., IEPs and reports;
6. Reviewing and signing informal progress notes prepared by the paraprofessional;
7. Providing ongoing on-the-job training for the paraprofessional;
8. Providing and documenting appropriate supervision of the paraprofessional;
9. Ensuring that the paraprofessional performs only tasks within the scope of the paraprofessional's responsibility;
10. Participating in the performance appraisal of the paraprofessional for whom he or she is responsible.

French and Pickett (2003) also stated that supervising teachers should participate in supervision training prior to using a paraprofessional and must upgrade supervision skills on a regular basis. Similarly, Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, and Stahl (2001) suggested the following competencies for teachers who direct the work of paraprofessionals:

1. Communicating with paraprofessionals;
2. Planning and scheduling;
3. Instructional support;
4. Modeling for paraprofessionals;
5. Relating to the public;
6. Training;
7. Managing of paraprofessionals (p. 525).

French (2003) reiterated the supervising teacher's responsibilities in terms of the following executive functions and then suggested new administrative duties for teachers to perform:

1. Orienting the paraprofessional to the classroom, school, and students;
2. Planning for paraprofessionals;
3. Scheduling for paraprofessionals;
4. Delegating tasks to paraprofessionals;
5. On-the-job training (including coaching of paraprofessionals).

She further added management and evaluation components—assignments new to most teachers' scope of training:

1. Monitoring and feedback regarding performance;
2. Managing the workplace, e.g., communication, problem solving, and conflict management.

As for teachers participating in the hiring process, this is not generally the case as paraprofessionals are often hired by the district rather than by individual schools; thus, this removes the possibility of teachers participating in the hiring process. Other paraprofessionals may be hired to work with a particular student, rather than a specific teacher. Additionally, Title I paraprofessionals may work under the general direction of a Title I teacher but carry out their assignments in several different classrooms during the day, complicating the monitoring and management process, and multiplying the number

of potential supervisors. In sum, neither federal laws nor the ensuing legal opinions have clearly defined what paraprofessional supervision must look like. As it stands, they give only a rather vague idea of what constitutes appropriate levels of supervision by looking for negative evidence—or lack of supervision. Opinion varies among the academic community and even among educators as to what constitutes supervision.

Paraprofessional Supervision and Ethnic Minority and ESL Students

Ethnic minority and ESL students experience many challenges in the U.S. school system—challenges which are typical to all young people who move from one culture and language group to another. First, they face the physical and emotional demands of having to operate in a second language for most or all of the school day. Operating in a second language always requires additional effort and presents unexpected pitfalls. Many ESL students are not competent in English and require Title I support for basic literacy. Having English as a second language can rob the student's school experience of all spontaneity and add stress and anxiety to the learning process. Secondly, the difficulties of communication includes communication relating to learning (being unable to respond to—or even understand—questions that support learning), and to social events (being tongue-tied in the presence of English-speaking peers, and misreading social cues). Third, the challenge of not feeling part of or a contributor to their community becomes particularly important to adolescents who look for influence over their surroundings and need to begin to see that they have responsibilities towards the community that supports them. Finally, these students face the challenge of furthering their education and skills, and therefore their employment prospects, particularly with a lack of role models from their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

However, paraprofessionals who work with such students can have considerable influence in mitigating the effects of second language challenges. In addition, paraprofessionals usually live in the community where they work and already have strong roots in the community (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2000b). They represent minority populations in greater percentages than do teachers (Haselkorn & Fideler, 1996). Because paraprofessionals tend to know the students in schools and communities, they help make the school experience less alienating and connect it to students' cultural experiences (Ashbaker, Enriquez, & Morgan, 2004; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004); and, in many cases, they are native speakers of students' languages and provide a sorely needed language resource (Rueda & Monzo, 2000). About a decade ago, Genzuck (1997) examined the sociocultural scaffolding practices of current and former Latino paraprofessionals as they worked with Latino students. He found that paraprofessionals used important cultural knowledge in their interactions with students during instruction and with teachers in informal contexts in the community.

Ashbaker et al. (2004) concluded that there is a need for careful supervision of paraprofessionals who work with ESL students. Clearly, the importance of adequate supervision for paraprofessionals as they support the work of ethnic minority students with and without disabilities cannot be understated (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997). Three levels of supervision that are critical to the success of students include:

- Individual classroom teachers provide on-site supervision

to paraprofessional work experience. Through preservice sessions—before the students arrive—they can provide orientation to classroom procedures and schedules. In brief meetings prior to scheduled classes, they can discuss the tasks assigned to students. During classroom time, both the paraprofessional and teacher can monitor the students' work, but the teacher can provide the paraprofessional with on-the-job training and feedback, particularly through modeling best teaching practices.

- School administrators provide an organized infrastructure for the paraprofessional experience, providing support through availing resources for preservice training, offering basic training in teamwork, and ensuring that the system of evaluation and rewards are in place to recognize good work.
- Paraprofessionals avail themselves of training and keep students at the center of their focus. They are aware of their role assignments and avoid treading on the teacher's responsibilities. Matters of confidentiality and professionalism are always upheld.

In a Utah project, an interesting reversal in roles provided useful insight into the experiences of ethnic minority students and the influence that minority paraprofessionals can have in the learning process. *Latinos in Action* was a project designed to provide high school students with valuable work experience and the opportunity to make a contribution to the local community. Details of the program are available elsewhere (see Ashbaker et al., 2004); but in essence, the program consisted of placements for Latino high school students as paraprofessionals in local feeder elementary schools. The placements were specifically targeting younger Latino students, and much of the support was given one-on-one. The student paraprofessionals attended the elementary schools three days each week as part of an advanced studies class with the remaining two days of class time spent in preparation and debriefing. School district personnel provided training in effective instructional and behavior management techniques, and the students also received assistance in preparing résumés and applying for jobs. The student paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers in the elementary schools also received training in working together as an instructional team prior to working together in the classroom. During training sessions, supervising teachers were given time to explain assignments to the student paraprofessionals and to provide orientation to basic classroom procedures (including behavior management). Professional issues such as confidentiality, dress codes, and general comportment were also covered in the basic training.

Variations of this program have been implemented to suit the local needs, including migrant programs and alternative high school programs. Universally, the benefits of the program for the younger Hispanic students have been identified as: (a) valuable additional instructional input on an individual basis; (b) availability of a role model of educational success by someone of their own cultural background; and (c) creation of a greater sense of security as they had someone to talk to and ask questions of in their own language.

For student paraprofessionals, the benefits have included: (a) valuable work experience in a supportive setting; (b) a tremendous sense of achievement as they saw the learning process take place for younger students under their tutelage; (c) insight into teaching as a possible career; (d) development of leadership and collaborative skills; (e) increased self-esteem and confidence as they realized the

difference between being considered bilingual (an asset) rather than ESL (a deficit); and (f) a sense of satisfaction in giving community service and having that contribution recognized.

Participation in the Utah Latinos program led to higher than usual graduation rates from high school, employment opportunities for the high school students as paraprofessionals in after-school programs, and, for several students, enrollment in college courses where that had not been considered an option previously. These benefits for student paraprofessionals are not nominal as they go to the very heart of how to respond to challenges faced by minority and ESL students.

The Administrator's Role in Paraprofessional Supervision

Using the Utah program as a model, three main aspects are apparent. First, Latino high school students were placed in local feeder elementary schools as paraprofessionals. Under the direction of assigned classroom teachers, they worked with younger Latino students who were experiencing difficulties, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. They provided additional instructional support for the younger students in their own language and in English, supported language assistance to facilitate communication with the teacher, and served as role models of school success within their common Hispanic culture. Secondly, the high school students received support for their paraprofessional experience in an advanced studies class taken for credit. This included coaching in general work-related skills and more specific teaching and behavior management strategies to use in the elementary classroom. Third, administrative support was provided in the form of busing to school sites, teamwork training sessions for the student paraprofessionals, and assignment to elementary school teachers.

Although the first two aspects required administrative support, the paraprofessionals received supervision and support at the classroom and teacher levels. The third level is purely an administrative issue and is beyond the authority of the classroom teacher. Again, although all three levels of supervision were important, the last—infrastructure support—was critical to the success of the various iterations of the Latino program. Where the administrator was careless of the program and expressed little or no appreciation for the student paraprofessionals' efforts and contributions, the program invariably prospered less than in those schools where the administrator made a point of endorsing the program in the school and showing an interest in the outcomes. This aspect of supervision also had financial implications: The supervising teachers, for example, cannot be expected to attend the teamwork training out of school hours without some form of compensation.

This suggests that while NCLB requires that paraprofessionals work under the direction of a professional, supervision in its broader sense requires the extra layer of administrator support and intervention. The aforementioned activities that resulted from the Latino in Action program can be applied to any school and serve to prevent problems such as those noted by Riggs (2001) and Mueller (2002). In her study of paraprofessionals, Riggs noted that in many cases paraprofessionals were unclear about specific policies and procedures related to their supervision. Further, she noted that paraprofessionals indicated that they were unaware of who would evaluate them and how they would be evaluated. Mueller (2002) argued that when evaluations do occur paraprofessionals report they are infrequent and often conducted by administrators who are unfamiliar with their work. As a

consequence, the link between paraprofessionals and their ultimate supervisors—school administrators—needs to be well-established and transparent.

Conclusion

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, with its requirement for highly qualified staff, mandates additional training for professional and paraprofessional staff. Increasing numbers of students in ESL and special education, where large numbers of paraprofessionals support instruction, require that they work under the direction of a teacher and that they receive supervision. The need for supervision of paraprofessionals is educationally undeniable. That NCLB and IDEIA should require it is reasonable since it would otherwise be impossible to guarantee the quality of services students receive without qualified professionals providing active oversight of the paraprofessionals who are their classroom deputies. What constitutes that supervision is still a matter of some debate. However, it is clear that teachers can provide direction and supervision for their paraprofessionals in order to meet the mandates of the NCLB and IDEIA Acts. Since ethnic minority students experience many challenges in the U.S. school system, paraprofessionals can offer wide-ranging support to these students. However, there is a critical need for careful supervision of paraprofessionals, including those who work with ESL and other minority students.

It is important for school administrators to provide an organized infrastructure for the system to accommodate the employment, training, and supervision of paraprofessionals. They must provide support through availing resources for preservice training, offering basic training in teamwork, and ensuring that the system of evaluation and rewards is in place to recognize good work. They can seek resources to provide schools with additional ethnic minority paraprofessional support because of the enriching support they can offer ethnic minority special education students. In addition, they must identify compensation for the supervising teachers to attend the teamwork training outside school hours instead of expecting them to attend without compensation and transportation reimbursement. School programs invariably prosper when administrators show interest in paraprofessionals and their contributions, support teachers' teamwork and training with paraprofessionals, provide guidance of innovative programs, and express appreciation for paraprofessionals' efforts and contributions. Paraprofessionals need to know they will be regularly evaluated, and that the content of the evaluation will relate specifically to the job description and the daily, regular duties. In the end, administrators conducting the evaluation must be familiar with the paraprofessional's duties and assignments.

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Managing Transition and Student Support Services for Ethnically Diverse College Students with Learning Disabilities

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Postsecondary transition for students with disabilities continues to be challenging. As it appears, transition components of special education services for students with learning disabilities have not received adequate attention (Dunn, 1996; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1996). This sentiment is likely, in part, due to patterns of postsecondary underachievement for students with learning disabilities. First, students with learning disabilities continue to drop out of high school at rates that exceed their peers without disabilities (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). In fact, 27% of students with learning disabilities who exited school during the 2000-2001 academic year dropped out while 64% received a regular diploma and 8% received an alternative credential (e.g., certificate of completion).

Both postsecondary education and employment, two domains of postsecondary transition planning, are causes for concern with regard to students with learning disabilities. While the number of college freshman with learning disabilities has sharply increased since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Public Law 94-142; Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2003), students with learning disabilities have enrolled in postsecondary educational settings less frequently than students with other disabilities (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, & Edgar, 2000). According to the 22nd Annual Report to Congress, in 1996 only 18.7% of students with learning disabilities were enrolled in academic postsecondary educational settings and 17.8% in vocational educational settings (U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 2000). Clearly, many ethnically diverse students are included in the disability category of learning disabilities as this is the largest category of disabilities served under Public Law 94-142 and its amendments and reauthorization (e.g., the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and the rate of identification of learning disabilities for students from ethnically diverse groups has steadily increased over the past several decades (National Research Council, 2002).

As indicated earlier, the increase in students with learning disabilities attending college is due to legislation prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities (Murray et al., 2000). At one time, college was out of the question for many ethnically diverse students

with learning disabilities. Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, federal law prohibited institutions of higher education from discriminating against students with disabilities. After the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112), colleges and universities did not suddenly open their doors to students with disabilities. Over time, as the courts helped to define the parameters of the law and public opinion about persons with disabilities improved, many colleges and universities became more comfortable with the idea of admitting and accommodating students with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities. Many institutions now have full-time faculty or staff persons who direct programs for these students. In fact, some have gained reputations as good places for these students because of the level of support offered (Bender, 2004). The overall purpose of this article is to examine the broader array of issues and challenges that impact ethnically diverse college students with learning disabilities.

Issues and Challenges Facing Ethnically Diverse College Students with Learning Disabilities

The transition from school to work or to postsecondary training is a critical period for all students. For ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities who have the potential to pursue higher education, colleges and universities offer an age-appropriate, integrated environment in which they can expand personal, social, and academic abilities that lead to career goals and employment options. The transition of ethnically diverse high school students with disabilities to higher education settings has been made difficult because of inadequacies in the preparation received in secondary schools. Still, secondary schools face serious difficulties in developing effective instructional programs for college-bound high school students with disabilities (Halpern & Benz, 1987; Mangrum & Strichart, 1983). Many ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities find themselves unprepared at college entry in a number of areas including chronic underachievement in academic skills, inadequate knowledge of subject matter, poor test-taking skills, lack of assertiveness, low self-esteem, and poor organizational skills (e.g., study skills and time management).

If ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities are to be adequately prepared for a rigorous postsecondary education, then high school programs must incorporate those skills and competencies that are essential for coping with social and academic demands found in college settings. The content of the secondary program must provide these learners with the skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary programs. Their effective inclusion into college preparatory programs requires that both regular and special educators contribute to the process. Therefore, the extent to which each group provides ethnically diverse students with preparatory skills needed to meet the elements of college setting is important. These students must receive a fair share of special education services. Most often, school policies and limitations in special services increase the probability of their failure. For example, the majority of these students seem to be graded on the same standards set for their nondisabled classmates, and they generally are not provided with tutoring services or other assistance outside of their classes. Moreover, many regular education teachers tend to receive little support in instructing these students. Wagner (1990) observed that "encouraging greater instruction of students with disabilities into regular education classes, without serious attention to the instruction that goes on in these classes, would

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seem simply to encourage greater rates of academic failure" (p. 28). The consequences of failing courses are serious, particularly those courses needed for graduation. Students who fail to accumulate sufficient numbers of required credit hours to pass 9th grade frequently drop out of high school before graduation (Thornton & Zigmond, 1986). Although passing 9th grade does not guarantee successful completion of high school or transitioning into postsecondary education, failure at this grade level increases the likelihood of dropping out, and by leaving school early, ethnically diverse students may miss educational experiences most important for transition to adulthood.

Teaching students who are not succeeding academically and those whose cultural backgrounds differ from those of the teacher requires changing instructional patterns and classroom procedures to facilitate academic success (Grant & Sleeter, 1998). Earlier, Obiakor and Utley (1997) called upon teachers to rethink their practices, revamp their strategies, and shift their paradigms as they provide services for ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities. Some years ago, Cummins (1989) noted that causes of ethnically diverse students' academic difficulties are to be found in the ways schools have reinforced, both overtly and covertly, the discrimination that certain ethnically diverse groups have historically experienced in the society at large. When research results regarding ethnically diverse students' underachievement are examined, a striking pattern emerges. The groups that currently perform poorly at school are usually those that have historically been discriminated against and regarded as inherently inferior by the dominant group. For example, in the United States, students of African American, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic backgrounds have experienced subjugation by the dominant group (Ogbu, 1978). Apparently, the educational underachievement of these groups is, in part, a function of the fact that schools have traditionally reinforced the ambivalence and insecurity that many of them tend to feel with regard to their own cultural identity (Cummins, 1986; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

It seems clear that fundamental changes will have to take place in schools to address the needs of ethnically diverse students. Schools should be about enhancing the quality of life for people and about creating better communities. General and special education instructors are consistently confronted with change while trying to maintain their traditional obligations. However, they seem to be poorly prepared to handle the changing demography. Similarly, delivering quality educational programming to ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities has always posed particular challenges to students, families, and service providers. Support services for these students are one of the most vital of all college services and are primarily the responsibility of administrators to deliver and support these services. The importance of this responsibility creates controversy on how support services should be implemented and about policy directions taken by administrators and higher institutions of learning. Economic and social difficulties, such as lack of financial resources and social injustices, make service delivery issues particularly problematic in colleges. In addition, the lack of adequate facilities and available technology make implementing a comprehensive support services program in colleges difficult. Given the present climate of fiscal austerity in higher education, colleges and universities may want to develop a core of support services for ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities and not attempt a comprehensive program until long-term institutional support is ensured. One cost-effective approach that higher education administrators should find

successful is to designate a staff person who has already shown an interest in students with disabilities as the campus contact person for ethnically diverse individuals with special needs.

Individuals who are given the responsibility for providing disability support services often come from a variety of different fields, including psychology, special education, counseling, social work, curriculum and instruction, rehabilitation, and allied health areas. Frequently, their job duties are expanded to encompass ethnically diverse college students with disabilities. Within a year or two, part-time duties often evolve into full-time "learning specialist" positions. The newly appointed learning specialist often looks for additional resources and contact persons who can assist in the development and refinement of the service delivery model (Gerber & Reiff, 1994). Developing postsecondary disability services can be a challenging opportunity as well as a lonely and frustrating undertaking. College and university administrators understand the benefits of educating a diverse student body (see Harvey, 2001). Ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities represent a significant segment of the group. As these students pursue not only undergraduate education but also graduate and professional education, it becomes increasingly critical for institutions to review both their mission and philosophies as they work toward an integrated model of service provision. Based on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, postsecondary institutions must provide equal access to programs and services for these students. It is essential that colleges and universities write policies that ensure that ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities receive the same high-quality education as their peers. These policies should address issues of admission, documentation of disability, accommodation, and curriculum modifications. Students are made aware of the existence of an appeal process, which is set forth in writing. In addition, they should have easy access to all written policies and procedures including the appeal process. Such documents should be available in a variety of formats, in all appropriate campus literature, and through available technology, such as a website, which all students can access (National Joint Commission on Learning Disability, 1996).

Of the numerous developmental programs across the nation, several can be identified as exemplars in terms of their success. However, many programs, including those considered successful, frequently encounter a variety of problems. The continuous burdens that programs face include problems of funding, staff recruitment and retention, admission and placement standards, ethnically diverse student enrollment, the relativity of curriculum, the quality of tests, and perceptions of the program. There are other problems that affect the implementation of developmental programs. Many of these problems are contingent upon each other such that one tends to exacerbate the other and, thereby, thwart the effective delivery of services to possibly larger numbers of students. Any of these problems or a combination of them can be identified in programs that are considered successful (Tomlinson, 1989). Apparently, it is not enough to merely place ethnically diverse students with disabilities in supportive developmental programs without providing appropriate training, materials, and support to them and to their professors. If these students are to be effectively assisted in supportive programs, critical issues and problems surrounding these programs must be addressed. Clearly, every successful program needs someone (e.g., a full-time staff member) to champion its cause. This also applies to programs for ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities. It

is upon this person's shoulders that responsibility falls for initiating the steps to bring disability programs to fruition at an institution. Support services are typically coordinated by this staff member who is responsible for providing a variety of "academic adjustments" that are mandated under law. Again, these laws require that postsecondary institutions make modifications to their academic requirements to ensure that they do not discriminate against a qualified student with a disability (Frank & Wade, 1993). These modifications may include the provision of course substitutions, adaptation of instruction methods, and modifications in the length of time for the completion of requirements; or the provision of auxiliary aids such as taped texts, sign language interpreters, guide dogs, tape recorders, readers or writers, and access to adaptive or assistive technology. The individual who provides these core supports is often instrumental in linking students with disabilities with other support services on campus, e.g., writing laboratory, math tutorial, and academic development center (Smith, 2004).

Vital Roles of Administrators

To effectively deal with these issues and problems, effective and efficient culturally sensitive leadership must be identified at college and university levels. A disability program is characterized by a variety of functions and typically includes a full-time coordinator or director with additional staff persons who are supportive in delivering a comprehensive menu of services. This administrator and his/her staff coordinate diagnostic services, provide specialized tutorial support, screen admission applicants, assist students in arranging for priority registration, and lead disability support groups. While the laws stipulate institutional flexibility in choosing the methods by which academic adjustments and auxiliary aids are supplied (Frank & Wade, 1993), it is the responsibility of the student with a disability to identify and document the disabling condition and request reasonable accommodation (Gordon & Keiser, 1998). Once a student has identified a disabling condition in a timely manner, has documented it adequately, and has requested specific academic adjustments and auxiliary aids, it is then the obligation of the postsecondary institution to determine what, if any, academic adjustments and auxiliary aids are appropriate for the disabling condition (Frank & Wade, 1993). Such decisions must take into consideration the essential nature of the educational program in question. According to Frank and Wade, postsecondary institutions are not obligated to waive course requirements, or academic or non-academic standards, as long as they can be shown to be essential to the program of study.

The person who serves as the initial catalyst for support services frequently is the program administrator. Program administrators work formally as the driving force behind all aspects of program development. Consequently, they should have knowledge of disabilities and ethnic diversity and possess good interpersonal skills and multidimensional administrative experiences. For instance, interpersonal skills are needed for working with faculty members and administrators to help them understand the nature of disabilities and types of services students need to succeed in college. Administrative experience is needed to hire and supervise staff and to prepare and monitor the budget and logistics of the program. More specifically, it is important for college administrators to understand and be supportive of service-delivery efforts for ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities as well as to handle obstacles to professors implementing the spirit of ADA (Smith, 2004).

In addition to fiscal issues, administrators must deal with litigation and related concerns about program modifications and instructional accommodations, and must be responsible for adjusting policies and procedures to meet ever-changing needs of students. A concerned administrator or coordinator must be ready to make presentations to institutional executive councils or deans. Individual discussions with key college officials present effective initial approaches to reinforcing the reason, mission, and legal base for services to students. Ongoing collaborations with the dean of students, dean of academic affairs, admissions director, and Section 504 coordinator provide important opportunities to share information needed by those officials to effectively serve this population. Relevant articles from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, court cases, Office of Civil Rights rulings from newsletters (e.g., Association on Higher Education and Disability's *Disability Accommodation Digest*, or the University of Connecticut's *Postsecondary Learning Disabilities Network News*), or journal articles and brief handouts from conferences can be very effective in keeping administrators connected to the campus.

As it appears, disability service administrators must wear many different professional hats. Individuals in this role must possess skills and knowledge in the areas of administration, direct service, consultation/collaboration, and institutional awareness (McGuire, 1998). They must engage in professional development activities if they are to keep abreast of critical issues in the field (Madaus, 1998). It is essential that they interact regularly with ethnically diverse students with disabilities. Whether in the initial intake interview or as part of an ongoing supportive relationship, those administrators must play pivotal roles in ensuring equal access within contexts of reasonable accommodations (McGuire, 1998). On any given day, they may encounter a range of situations that require attention and creativity. Below are event samples that might confront an administrator during the course of a normal week (see Korbel & Lucia, 1996):

- A student may request a sign-language interpreter and notetakers because of a profound hearing loss;
- A student may identify himself/herself as having a learning disability one week prior to final exams to seek extended test time;
- A student may file a complaint regarding physical accessibility to a campus building.
- A student with a bipolar disorder may want to apply for clinical placement in a local hospital;
- A student with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may want a reduced course load and testing accommodations on the basis of a note from his/her doctor;
- A student with learning disabilities may want the same accommodations he/she received in high school e.g., oral essay exams, no foreign language, and no penalty for misspelled words in writing assignments, when the documentation substantiating his/her request is shaky.

Clearly, the student support administrator is often the only professional on campus with direct responsibility for overseeing day-to-day operations of the office that is the "clearinghouse" for disability-related services. While the campus might also employ an ADA compliance officer and perhaps a counselor who offers personal and academic advice, most daily decisions rest with the student support administrator (McGuire, 1998). According to McGuire, the "essential functions" of this job include, but are not

limited to the following:

- Determining a student's eligibility for protection under the ADA;
- Analyzing documentation to ensure that it reasonably supports the claim of disability;
- Deciding the nature of a reasonable accommodation on a case-by-case basis;
- Developing institutional policies and procedures.

The multidimensional roles of student support administrators are reflected by the many fields of training from which they come. For example, Madaus (1996) reported that most administrators had training in counseling, social work, law, special education, education (elementary, secondary, and higher), and rehabilitation counseling. Given the diversity of backgrounds among administrators, it seems that they need ongoing professional training to ethically and fairly discharge their duties.

Conclusion

For many ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities, participation in postsecondary education is necessary. However, to achieve this goal, a comprehensive transition planning is essential. As a consequence, postsecondary personnel must collaborate with others to ensure nondiscriminatory but sensible treatment of ethnically diverse students. In this article, I have discussed issues and problems surrounding the delivery of support services, accommodations and modifications, and the role of the administrator in establishing support services for college or university ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities. Clearly, for a program to be successful, it is important that administrators understand their roles in providing opportunities for these students. They must be a part of the mission of the college or university to comply with the civil rights laws and make sure that discrimination of any kind is prevented, reduced, or eliminated on campus.

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Building Successful Multicultural Special Education Programs Through Innovative Leadership

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Across America's schools, administrators are faced with various educational challenges. On a daily basis, administrators are accountable for overseeing their educational program and ensuring a quality education for all students. However, in more recent years, there has been increased debate about the level of educational service received by multicultural students with special needs (Obiakor & Utley, 2004). In many large urban school districts, multicultural students, particularly African Americans, constitute the majority of students served in special education programs (e.g., programs for students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and attention deficit disorder). While multicultural students are overrepresented in these programs, they are underrepresented in programs which may lead to future opportunities (i.e., gifted and talented). This overrepresentation contributes to the deferred dreams of many multicultural students, as they are denied the opportunity to maximize their potential in school and ultimately in life (Ford & Harris, 1994; Harris & Ford, 1999). Despite concerns over the disproportionality issue, the number of multicultural students placed in special education programs has continued to increase. Ideally, when multicultural students and white students enter school, their academic skills are quite similar. However, by fourth grade, there is a gap between the academic skills of multicultural students, particularly African American students and their white counterparts (Kunjuftu, 2001). Not only is there an increase in the achievement gap, a substantial number of these students are placed in lower track special education programs while an increased number of whites are placed in higher track educational programs.

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These issues call for culturally responsive leadership in today's general and special education programs.

It has become increasingly evident that multicultural students are misidentified, misassessed, miscategorized, misplaced, and misinstructed (Obiakor, 2001a). The hope for these students appears to be almost futile. In many instances, those placed in special education are viewed as helpless, hopeless, and future noncontributors to the society. Once multicultural students are placed in special education programs, teacher expectations of them are lowered. Teachers tend to use more aggressive discipline with these students, especially African American males. In addition, in some instances they begin to feel sorry for them instead of helping them develop the necessary skills to succeed in school and in life (Williams, Stanley, & Fair, 2002). Thus, these students rarely receive a quality life-enhancing education in those special education programs in which they are often inappropriately placed (Patton, 1998). Despite educational reforms that have attempted to address these issues, inequities in education for diverse students with special needs continue to dominate (Daniels, 1998). To address this issue, school administrators must ensure teachers are prepared with an understanding of the benefits of multiculturalism and a realization of how ignoring students' culture could contribute to their placement in special education programs (McCray, Alston, & Beachum, 2006; Williams, Beachum, Obiakor, & McCray, in press). Hence, school administrators must understand their roles in the teaching and learning process of multicultural students, especially those with special education needs. At the school level, the school administrator is the designee appointed to ensure that each student receives a quality education (Williams et al., 2002). The effectiveness of a school's educational program is ultimately determined by the leadership and attitude of the school administrator (McCray, Alston, & Beachum, 2006). Earlier, Goor and Schwenn (1997) asserted that educational leadership is the number one variable associated with effective schools. School administrators produce the climate that makes learning possible and programs successful (Beachum & McCray, 2004). Hence, they should play a key role in providing culturally responsive leadership for multicultural students (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004), especially those with special needs.

However, because of increased duties, many school administrators are unaware of the extent of their responsibilities as they relate to these students (see Goor & Schwenn, 1997). As a result, they delegate related tasks to the special education teacher, diagnostic teacher, or another designee. As they delegate tasks related to special education students, unfortunately they often delegate their authority to staff who have little cultural connection to the students. With increased debates over various aspects of special education (e.g., the quality of education received in special education programs and inappropriate placement and miscategorization), it has become apparent that multicultural leadership is needed to prepare school administrators and teachers to design effective special education programs (Goor & Schwenn, 1997). This, of course, is the thrust of this article.

Successful Programs for Multicultural Students with Special Needs

In schools across the nation, several strategies have proven to yield positive outcomes for multicultural students, especially those with special needs. Boswell (2005) noted that educators implemented the Responsiveness to Intervention program (RTI) to aid English language learners in California. The RTI program was fueled by the notion that

even after implementing the best practices in schools, there was still much work to be done. Students needed more intervention. Hence, in addition to existing interventions, fourth and fifth grade students still struggling spent an extra 45 minutes of instruction with a speech and language pathologist or resource specialist over a nine week period. As a result of this intervention, these students gained more than a year's growth in reading (Boswell, 2005). Furthermore, after the first year of the program, only 4 of the 63 participating students were referred for special education services. According to Boswell, this program received the Golden Bell Award by the California School Board Association. In addition to programs like RTI, another intervention is administering effective mentoring and tutoring programs. Mentor programs have proven to be very successful in decreasing absenteeism and increasing academic achievement in students. Gensemer (2000) noted that peer mentor programs in elementary schools can increase the use of critical thinking skills, improve interpersonal skills, and increase the use of conflict resolution skills. Students learning from each other has proved to be very successful. Barone and Taylor (1996) contended that cross-cultural tutoring enhances students' self-esteem, academic learning time, and sense of responsibility.

In the administration of successful programs for multicultural students, especially those with special needs, finding ways to get and keep parents involved is paramount. An approach that has yielded positive results is literature and book clubs. For example, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a former Director of Educational Services, started a program called Literature Circles. In an informal interview with a teacher at one of the participating schools, she noted how much more parents were stressing literature at home by how her students responded at school (Talley, 2003 personal communication). Such literature programs are needed to keep parents involved in the learning process of their children. According to Lilly and Green (2004), "Educators can foster collaborative partnerships with parents by creating a link between home and school. The implementation of multicultural literature promotes sensitivity to other cultures, instills a sense of pride in one's heritage, and encourages appreciation for diverse literary traditions" (p. 131). Another program to assist multicultural students is Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) (Elementary & Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center, n.d.). This preventive program assists teachers with strategies to better educate students who exhibit academic, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. TAT was developed as a strategy to provide students with assistance in the classroom rather than pulling them out to receive services. Such an approach provides students with greater access to the general curriculum. TAT allows a team of teachers, psychologists, parents, and counselors to brainstorm strategies to assist struggling students prior to being considered for special education.

More preventive programs and strategies must be implemented to address the learning needs of multicultural students and to decrease their overwhelming presence in special education programs. The programs mentioned above are merely samples of those used in schools across the country. However, effective implementation and administration of these programs is the key. Therefore, it is critical that school administrators and teachers are prepared to implement such programs aimed at meeting the academic challenges experienced by multicultural students.

Effective Administration for Multicultural Students with Special Needs

For many years, much attention has been given to the overrepresentation of multicultural students, particularly African Americans in special education (Artiles & Trent 1994; Lara, 1994; Patton, 1998; Serwatka & Deering, 1995). For instance, Lara described the disproportionate placement which occurs when the representation of a group in special education is disproportionately higher or lower to their numbers in the school district as a whole. If positive change is to occur, there must be a change in the type of administrative leadership in urban school districts. School administrators must recognize the cultural disconnect between majority white teachers and the multicultural students served (Beachum, Dentith, & McCray, 2004; Kailin, 2002). In addition, school administrators must help teachers to understand how this disconnect contributes to the disproportionate number of multicultural students. Hence, school administrators must promote multiculturalism to meet the needs of the wide range of multicultural students present on a daily basis (McCray et al., 2004). Clearly, administrators who embrace multiculturalism recognize and address the differences of their teachers, students, and parent population (i.e., linguistic, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and learning differences). Such administrators view student differences as qualities that make each individual unique and valuable; recognize and promote cultural differences; and provide opportunities for growth and development (Sapon-Shevin, 2001). Additionally, such school administrators are aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses as they collaborate with and empower teachers and other staff around them to help provide all students with support (Ryan, 2006).

School administrators who embrace and utilize multicultural practices in their schools exhibit a sense of self-confidence that allows others to feel comfortable, and they do not prohibit others from being themselves. They trust and motivate others to work together to meet the academic and social needs of all students (Williams et al., 2002). In this learning community, school administrators establish a purpose and collaborate with teachers, parents, and community leaders to create a cohesive and cooperative environment that benefits all students, especially multicultural students with special needs. They do not look for ways to categorize students; they encourage individualities and build on them to create a multifaceted, multicultural, multi-talented learning community. This community works together to meet individual needs, value each member, and ensure higher learning through increased participation of various community members. Patton and Townsend (1997) noted that an inclusive environment is needed where educators address the sociocultural and psychosocial needs of African American students, families, and communities. In essence, school administrators celebrate diversity and view students' differences as assets rather than deficits.

Racist and discriminatory practices lie at the root of many social and academic achievement problems facing multicultural learners (Ford & Harris, 1994; Kailin, 2002; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Tatum, 1997). Such practices have proven to be detrimental to the quality of education that these learners receive. As Grossman (1991) pointed out:

Those who believe there are ethnic and class differences in intelligence find it understandable that some groups are disproportionately placed in classes for the retarded and that Euro-American middle-class students are more likely to be assigned to courses of study (tracks) for "high potential"

students in which teachers stress independent study and higher level cognitive skills. At the same time, Hispanic, Native American, African American, and working-class students are over represented in tracks for “low potential” students in which teachers stress instructional techniques that involve concrete, repetitive drill and practice. (p. 20)

Hence, the role of school administrators in the identification process of multicultural students for special education is critical. For instance, principals must ensure that students are not being conveniently referred into special education programs. They must also continuously attend inservice trainings on strategies to work with multicultural students, especially those with special needs. They also must empower and encourage teachers to try different techniques to maximize student achievement and minimize student placement in special education programs. In essence, school administrators and teachers must work collaboratively to address the educational needs of multicultural students prior to placement in special education as well as those students currently placed to ensure the quality of service provided. According to Goor (1995), “Collaborative principals who promote educational excellence take an active approach in the process in which teachers request help with students before referring for special education evaluation”(pp. 137-138). Thus, inservice and preservice training emerge as areas that need to be addressed in school leadership.

Clearly, one of the primary factors that contribute to African American placement in special education programs is lack of teacher training (Graybill, 1997). To provide a quality education for students with special needs, teacher preparation programs must be transformed to produce culturally responsive educators. Graybill (1997) noted that lack of teacher training, poor learning environments, and poor self-esteem are associated more with students being placed in special education programs than their ability to learn. Hence, improved teacher preparation regarding cultural learning styles may serve as a vehicle to address the number of referrals and placements of students in special education, and provide them with more opportunities to succeed (Ewing, 1995). In many cases, teachers and leaders enter multicultural urban settings with negative preconceived notions about teaching multicultural children. They often label these children as “failures” before giving them a chance to be winners. Delpit (1992) noted that teacher preparation programs expose student teachers and future leaders to an education based on name calling and labeling to conceal its flaws. Sileo (2000) argued that teacher attitudes and reactions to diverse youth influence classroom climate, student achievement, behavioral expectations, self-concept, and their sense of belonging. Obiakor (2001a) confirmed that when multicultural learners behave, look, learn, and talk differently than their teacher or other Euro-American students, teachers assume something is mentally wrong with them, often with the support of their school administrators. Furthermore, when college professors fail to provide balanced perspectives in leadership preparation programs, they indiscriminately encourage teachers to develop attitudes that prevent diverse learners from receiving a quality education (Dantley, 2005; Dooley & Voltz, 1999). Such practice has led to detrimental situations for many multicultural learners. Teachers must be educated on using culturally relevant practices that meet the learning needs of a wide range of multicultural students (Delpit, 1992). As Sileo (2000) pointed out, multicultural course transformations necessitate that teacher educators design and deliver programs that model inclu-

sive and culturally sensitive curricular, instructional, and assessment materials and strategies appropriate to diverse students’ learning needs.

To be effective and to address the educational needs of multicultural students, especially those with special needs, school administrators must implement best practices in their schools, and teachers must utilize best practices within their classroom. Effective leaders encourage teachers to be effective. Grant and Gomez (1995) reported that effective teachers: (a) have high expectations for their students and believe all students are capable of academic success; (b) communicate clearly, pace lessons appropriately, involve students in decisions, monitor students’ progress, and provide frequent feedback; (c) use culturally relevant teaching approaches that integrate students’ native language and dialect, culture, and community into classroom activities to make input more relevant and comprehensible, and (d) use curricula in teaching strategies that promote coherence, relevance, progression, and continuity. Boswell (2005) asserted that too many children are labeled as having a learning disability when they need better instruction. Hence, effective implementation of these strategies will yield more positive academic outcomes for multicultural students, especially those with special needs.

In schools, administrators must change their own attitudes as well as the attitudes of teachers to embrace the differences of a multicultural student population with special needs. Harry (2002) remarked that “understanding that our own beliefs and practices are but one cultural variation should make it easier to respect, and therefore to serve the wide diversity of families whose children are served by special education programs” (p. 138). With the high demand for educational accountability, in many cases administrators and teachers do not want students with special needs in their schools because they may bring down test scores or prevent other students from learning due to requiring much of the teacher’s time (Williams et al., 2002). Preparing administrators and teachers to embrace the concept of cultural diversity will require professional development which examines content, methods of instruction, and teaching material (Dooley & Voltz, 1999; Guillaume, Zuniga-Hill, & Yee, 1995). For example, Guillaume et al., noted that school administrators and teachers must:

1. Develop a deep knowledge base about diverse ethnic groups and have multiple opportunities for teachers to examine personal attitudes towards students of color.
2. Develop culturally and linguistically supportive strategies and approaches that make learning available and equitable for all students.
3. Have ample exposure to students of diverse backgrounds and to teachers who can model appropriate instructional approaches.
4. Commit to professional growth regarding issues of diversity. (p. 70)

Collaborative Leadership with Community Members and Parents

To increase the academic performance of multicultural students, especially those with special needs, community members and parents must be involved. When parents feel included, involved, valued, and empowered, they set the stage for academic and social success for students (Tepper, 2003). The role that community

members and parents play in their children's education has been underestimated and downplayed. However, to effectively address the needs of multicultural students with special needs, the important role of community members must be recognized. School administrators and teachers must take steps to open lines of leadership communications with parents and community leaders to find out who they are so they can better educate their children. Chalmers and Olson (1995) agreed that communications with parents will reduce conflicts and enhance participation. According to Sheets (2005), many teachers are intimidated and overwhelmed because they lack knowledge of and genuine lived experiences with diversity. When community members and parents are involved in collaborative leadership, the dangers of misidentification, misassessment, mislabeling, misplacement, and misinstruction are taken seriously. For example, when a referral is made for possible special education consideration of a student, school administrators must be sure that parents are invited and present for meetings regarding their child. The absence of parents and community members in school-related activities should be an enormous "red flag" to school administration. Williams et al. (2002) indicated that many parents (especially those with less financial means) do not show up at school activities because:

1. They assume that they will hear a lot of negative comments regarding their children.
2. They cannot take off from work in the middle of the day to attend the meeting.
3. They assume that teachers know what is best for their child since they went to school to learn how to work with children.
4. They assume that their input is not needed since school personnel already know what they want to do with their child.

School administrators must maximize the opportunities for community members and parents to participate on assessment teams by scheduling meetings at times convenient for everyone and providing transportation, as well as child care accommodations if needed (Goor, 1995). Too often, scheduled assessment meetings occur without advocates or parents being present to voice their concerns. In addition, principals and teachers must ensure that information is being communicated in a language and at a level that all participants understand. Culturally responsive leaders empower parents and community members to take a proactive stance on behalf of their children (Obiakor, 2001b) because their voices are essential in helping to make a decision regarding educational services. Tepper (2003) noted that children of all ages can benefit when school leaders, community members, and parents cooperatively and effectively assist children to realize their full potential. School administrators must utilize community resources to educate multicultural students, especially those with special needs. Many opportunities that are present beyond school are limited to these learners because of what happens inside the school. In many instances, after graduation from high school, multicultural students with special needs have a difficult time obtaining meaningful jobs to support themselves and their families. When employers are notified of the "special education" status of these students, they are at increased risk of not being hired or being hired in low level positions (Williams et al., 2002). As a consequence, school administrators must ensure that multicultural students with special needs are included in various aspects of schooling. They must also help build collaborative leadership with teachers, parents, and students to see

that although students with special needs learn differently, they can learn and be given the opportunity to maximize their full potential in gaining and exploring community resources (Williams et al., 2002).

Conclusion

In this article, we have discussed several aspects of administering successful programs for multicultural students, especially those with special needs. The disproportionate number of multicultural students placed in special education programs is a disturbing reality that must be addressed (Kunjufu, 2001). School administrators must be proactive in preventing the misidentification, misassessment, miscategorization, and misplacement of multicultural students. It is important that school leaders utilize their influence to gather resources to meet the learning needs of all students. No longer can the academic needs of diverse students be dismissed as a hopeless endeavor. School administrators must provide culturally responsive leadership that ensures all students a high quality education. From our perspective, training must be provided. We must recruit more diverse leaders and teachers and prepare them to work with a wide range of multicultural students. School administrators, teachers and service providers must recognize, appreciate, and celebrate student diversity. In addition, they must assist teachers to develop and implement collaborative strategies to better educate multicultural students. When such strategies are implemented and practiced, students will be exposed to new learning experiences that will increase their academic performance, and schools will notice their decreased placement of students in special education programs.

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Commentary

Social Studies Methods Students Engaged in Service-Learning: Reciprocity is the Key

Saundra Wetig

As a social studies educator, I have found myself at the end of each semester reflecting on my preservice teachers' practicum experiences. Each semester, the foremost question I had was: Was this practicum the best learning experience that I could provide? Prior to the spring 2003 semester, a typical practicum placement in my elementary social studies methods course consisted of eight lessons (lasting approximately 45 minutes) across four consecutive weeks in an urban elementary school setting. The preservice teachers entered the classrooms eager and motivated to teach the lessons they had researched, but I noted that most of the excitement was generated from my students, not the classroom teacher. The teachers at first appeared enthusiastic about the prospect of preservice teachers entering their classrooms to teach the social studies units, but, early into each practicum experience, I noted that once the ownership of the classroom was turned over to the preservice teachers, the classroom teacher often appeared hesitant and anxious. For example, teachers made frequent checks of the clock that were often followed by the question, "How long do you think you'll be here today?" As a result, preservice teachers many times felt rushed to complete their lesson plans.

Based upon these observations, I recognized that I needed to revisit the practicum experience to reassess my goals, ideas, and priorities regarding how to provide a quality teaching and learning experience for my preservice teachers. As I reflected on the practicum experience, I identified the missing link – reciprocity. The practicum served the purpose of engaging preservice teachers in a teaching/learning experience that advanced their skills, but it did not meet the needs of all stakeholders. In this article, I will describe my efforts to provide elementary preservice teachers with the opportunity to become active citizens through a methods course and practicum involving academic service-learning.

Defining Service-Learning

Jacoby defined service-learning as a "form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and

reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning."¹ Jacoby also noted that it is through the element of reciprocity that service-learning is elevated to the level of philosophy.² Kendall noted that service-learning is a philosophy of "human growth and purpose, a social vision, an approach to community, and a way of knowing."³ Overall, the service-learning experience should actively engage students in forming their own pedagogical schemata through experiential learning in a course-relevant context. As pedagogy, service-learning is education grounded in experiential learning and includes structured time for students to reflect on the experience. It is used by instructors in higher education as well as those in P-12 schools to enhance traditional modes of learning.

Service Learning Integration

Service-learning, carried out in the context of social studies curriculum, has the potential to foster a sense of civic duty necessary for 21st classrooms. Ellis stated that "...you don't just *learn* social studies as a school subject; you *take part* in it. In that sense, social studies demand of teachers and students a deeper level of knowledge. It demands knowledge lived, not just information studied."⁴ In redesigning the practicum experience, I based the service-learning project objectives on the three criteria established by Howard for an academic service-learning course.⁵ First, the service provided in the community must be relevant and meaningful to all stakeholders involved. Second, the course must enhance student academic learning, and, third, it must directly and intentionally prepare students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society. Below I describe how each criteria was operationalized in the practicum.

Criteria One:

Efforts to Establish a Relevant and Meaningful Service with the Community

Ellis noted: "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world."⁶ Integrating service-learning into my social studies methods course would provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to engage in a direct life experience that was both relevant and meaningful to what they eventually would do and to whom they would serve in the community.

To support preservice teachers in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for teaching social studies, I strive to provide them with an understanding of the knowledge base of social studies. The foundation of elementary social studies curriculum is embedded in the six social science disciplines of anthropology, geography, history, sociology, political science, and economics. Over the years, I noted that the least understood area for preservice teachers was the discipline of economics. The opportunity to strengthen this discipline area, connect with the community, and establish a relevant and meaningful learning experience came in December 2002 when the instructional facilitator at my children's elementary school approached me to see if I would be interested in serving as a volunteer for the Junior Achievement (JA) program beginning spring semester 2003. Because I had prior knowledge of the program, I readily agreed to volunteer for a fifth grade classroom.

The elementary Junior Achievement program is comprised of six sequential themes: Ourselves, Our Families, Our Community, Our City, Our Region, and Our Nation. I noted that JA's elementary

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program complemented the existing social studies curriculum and demonstrated how economics impact people's lives as workers, consumers, and citizens.⁷ As such, social studies preservice teachers could benefit from engagement in JA. The JA curriculum would provide an opportunity for them to become more knowledgeable about economics education, with the added dimension of then teaching the economics-based lessons in a building that supported volunteers in the classroom.

I contacted the instructional facilitator to ask if the teachers in her building would be willing to participate in an academic service-learning project utilizing the program materials designed by JA, and she agreed. The instructional facilitator then directed me to a state JA staff representative. We discussed the viability of a collaborative partnership between the public school, university students, and JA. The JA representative immediately agreed that forming a partnership would benefit all stakeholders. To prepare for the project, the staff representative visited my social studies methods classroom on campus to distribute materials and to orient the preservice teachers to the goals and mission of JA. For successful implementation of the program, the JA representative asked that the lessons be delivered in the elementary classrooms across five consecutive weeks. The desired time in the classroom varied from 30-50 minutes depending on the grade level.

Following the JA presentation, the preservice teachers were assigned to five-member social studies service-learning project teams. Each team was given two 50-minute class periods to review the following JA materials contained in a specific grade level briefcase: guide for consultants and teachers; master list of materials; activity plans; teaching manual; pre-program and post-program questionnaires; student handouts; certificates; and supplementary materials. Utilizing materials from JA, the teams developed five lesson plans using a standardized template which included: (a) lesson content; (b) lesson rationale; (c) materials; (d) local, state, and national standards addressed; (e) performance objectives; (f) anticipatory set; (g) instructional sequence; and (h) closure. Each team met with the instructor to review the final lesson plans to ensure that the lesson objectives and activities aligned with the goals and expectations outlined by JA. Team leaders were then responsible for contacting the elementary teacher to whom they were assigned to coordinate and schedule five consecutive dates to teach five 30-50 minute lessons. During the meeting with the elementary teachers, the team leaders shared copies of the JA materials and lesson plans. The service-learning project occurred over five consecutive Monday mornings at the partnership elementary school with 43 preservice teachers enrolled in two sections of social studies methods course engaged in the project.

Upon the completion of the spring 2003 service-learning project, each team of preservice teachers was asked to respond to the following question: How has the service-learning project established a relevant and meaningful service within our community? Sample responses demonstrated its effectiveness:

Team 1/1st Grade: "The service-learning project was relevant and meaningful for our community because as future teachers it allowed us to interact with our future environment—an elementary classroom. It was also relevant because it displayed volunteering to benefit others without costing the school anything. We believe it is a posi-

tive influence on the student's outlook on their educational future."

Team 2/1st Grade: "This project established relevance within our community and with the students by connecting material to real-world situations. By having college students come into the classroom we served as higher education role models. The project gave elementary students a chance to become more knowledgeable about economics and their place in a community."

Team 3/2nd Grade: "This service-learning project helped introduce different types of jobs to the students. They also learned the circulation of money. By the end of the lessons they related the money unit back to the lesson on how the community pays taxes which was a huge connection. We thought our part was worthwhile as they were able to make connection across lessons."

Criteria Two:

Enhancing Student Academic Learning

JA lesson activities directly aligned with and supported the social studies standards established by the local school district. So the project provided a relevant and meaningful service to the elementary students that enhanced both university and elementary students' social studies experiences. As mentioned previously, the JA elementary school program included the six sequential themes for kindergarten through fifth grade plus two capstone experiences. Elementary students learned concepts and skills at each grade level that built on those taught in preceding grades. Problem-based or "real world" interactive learning activities utilizing experiential learning activities helped students to see the relevance of education to the workplace and to prepare them for secondary school and lifelong learning.⁸

Criteria Three:

Preparing Students for Active Civic Participation in a Diverse Democratic Society

As part of the project, preservice teachers were required to engage in reflective activities regarding the economics lessons they had taught which included debriefing activities and whole group discussions following each lesson taught in the elementary school. Discussions were based on the following topics/prompts: (a) positive factors of the lesson; (b) lesson areas that could have been strengthened; (c) personal thoughts regarding the lesson; and (d) lessons learned. After each lesson, team members were required to write an individual reflection based on the following questions: (a) Do you believe the lesson objective was met? (b) What were the positive factors that occurred throughout the lesson? (c) What areas could have been strengthened in the lesson; and (d) How has this project prepared elementary students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society? The team leader was required to keep a team portfolio that included individual team member reflections and a summative team reflection.

As an example of criteria three, the JA elementary school program for second grade focused on *Our Community*. The five lessons in the program examined the responsibilities and opportunities available within the community. Through hands-on activities, students learned about workers, the jobs they perform, why workers are paid, the role of taxes, and where and how to save money.⁹ During lesson four,

the elementary students engaged in a lesson that required them to determine the best use for an empty store on a "How Does a Community Work?" poster. The students were led through a step-by-step decision-making process designed to assist them in understanding how group decisions are made. The following comments are representative of one team's response to the question: How has this project prepared elementary students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society?

Team 1/2nd grade: "The students engaged in a realistic voting process where they had to decide which business had to fill the empty space. They based their decisions not only on their personal preference, but how it would benefit the community as well. The lessons focus on how a community interacts and the roles and jobs people have to help form a community."

In a second example, the JA elementary school program for kindergarten focuses on Ourselves. The five lessons in this program introduce the economic role of individuals.¹⁰ The collective team response for Team 2/Kindergarten to the question stated above was as follows:

"This project prepared the elementary students by providing practical ways for them to be involved in the community. The project also provided the students with a diverse multicultural outlook on the community of other children. For example, a student took an idea from one of the stories from the JA curriculum about ways to earn money. She went home and made bookmarks and sold them in her neighborhood. She made \$9.00 and told us she was going to save it to buy a house! This is just one of the ideas that made students learn throughout this project."

Conclusion

Upon the completion of the project, each preservice teacher was asked to evaluate the project on a teacher-designed ten item Likert survey (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree) that included items such as: (1) I was satisfied with the service-learning project at the elementary school; (2) I believe the students learned basic concepts related to economics education; (3) The service-learning project established a relevant and meaningful service within our community; (4) The students at the elementary school were receptive to learning; (5) The lessons enhanced student learning; and (6) The project has prepared elementary students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society. All respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed*.

Through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved in this project, I believe the three criteria for an academic service-learning course were met through reciprocity. Preservice teachers and elementary students were engaged in lessons that were relevant and meaningful as well as supportive of existing social studies standards. In addition, Junior Achievement lessons taught by preservice teachers both promoted and enhanced student academic learning. Preservice teachers administered a pre-program and post-program questionnaire at each grade level. For example, second grade students were asked to complete a four item matching question, three short answer questions, and one multiple choice item that had five correct responses for a total of twelve correct responses. Students showed measurable improvement on the number of correct responses between the pre-test and post-test. (See Table 1). Third, through engagement in this service-learning project, elementary and university

Table 1
Student Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores
on Social Studies

Pre-Test		Post-Test	
# Items Answered Incorrectly	% Students Responding	#Items Answered Incorrectly	% Students Responding
0	13	0	21
1	33	1	38
2	29	2	33
3	21	3	0.4
4	0	4	0.4
5	0.4	5	0

students were involved in an activity that assisted in their preparation for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society.

Since the 2003 spring semester, 173 elementary social studies methods preservice teachers have been engaged in an academic/community service-learning practicum that integrates social studies skills and content and structured reflective activities. In my quest to redesign the practicum experience to include service-learning, I found that service-learning was more than just a program: It is also a philosophy and a pedagogy.¹¹

Endnotes

¹ Barbara Jacoby, "Service-Learning in Today's Higher Education," in *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, eds. Barbara Jacoby and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 5.

² Ibid., 9.

³ Jane C. Kendall, "Combining Service and Learning: An Introduction" in *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service*, eds. Jane C. Kendall and Associates (Raleigh, National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1990), 23.

⁴ Arthur K. Ellis, *Teaching and Learning Social Studies*, 7th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 2.

⁵ Jeffrey Howard, ed., "Three Necessary Criteria for Academic Service-Learning," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Companion Volume (Summer 2001): 12.

⁶ Ellis, *Teaching and Learning*, 3.

⁷ JA Worldwide, "Elementary School Programs Overview," http://www.ja.org/programs/programs_elem_overview.shtml.

⁸ JA Worldwide, "Bringing the Real World to Kids," <http://www.ja.org/default.asp>.

⁹ JA Worldwide, "Elementary School Programs: Our Community," http://www.ja.org/programs/programs_elem_comnty.shtml.

¹⁰ JA Worldwide, "Elementary School Programs: Ourselves," http://www.ja.org/programs/programs_elem_selves.shtml.

¹¹ Jacoby, "Service-Learning in Today's Higher Education," 5.

Commentary

Abusive Administration: A Case Study¹

Anne L. Jefferson

In the academic world, there is an assumption of reasonable administrative conduct. In fact, to ensure such conduct, universities, like other public institutions, may have collective agreements to reinforce this assumption. However, in some cases, the university as employer can very quickly off the mark should any faculty member wander into what it considers unacceptable conduct. At the same time, university administrators may not hold themselves to the same standard. This case study provides an illustration whereby the double standard revealed abusive action by administration. The case omits names of individuals for they are not the intended focus. Rather, the process that evolved is the focus of this commentary because of how it was used by the administration to evade accountability for alleged abusive actions. It is an example of a technique commonly used by those in power who seek to secure their position without investigation.

The Scenario

The events described below occurred within an institute of higher learning and involved multilevels of administration and the professional ranks within one sector of the institute. For a number of years, there had been tension between the administration of this sector and the professionals. For some, life had become a series of grievances against the administration. For others, life had become political survival whereby survival required aligning oneself with the administration unquestioningly or being prepared to depart unceremoniously. Still, others flourished as they were rewarded (or as some claimed, "bought") for the promotion of the administration. All in all, the work environment was tense and unhealthy. Conversations were guarded, and open discussion of academic matters was systematically discouraged. Committees were restructured so at no time were the professionals, as a group, convened to discuss academic issues. The administration had used its power to remove open opposition or even discussion. Membership on committees was generally hand-picked by the administration. There was a process for nominations, but the general view was those who served were aligned with the administration and hence did not represent the voice of coworkers. Suspicion of motives prevailed.

In the spring of 2005, the tension reached a breaking point. An anonymous letter appeared in a well-read student newspaper on campus. The authors made a number of serious accusations against the administration of their sector. In essence, if the accusations were proven to be true, the letter provided insight into an abusive working environment for faculty members. It was a cry for help from individuals who found themselves in a situation they were unable to resolve.

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The administrators named in the publication did not respond to the letter. Instead, the senior administration of the institution responded on their behalf.

The response was quick and carried definitive sanctions. The editors of the newspaper were "persuaded" to publish an apology for the publication of the letter. The top senior executive of the institution wrote a letter to faculty members making it very clear that such a letter was not acceptable. Internal to the sector, a divisive campaign was started by a combination of current and former administrators whereby the division of faculty members into "us" and "them" camps was clearly developing. The senior support staff of the named administrators also joined in.

Instead of taking steps to bring this movement to a stop, the administration took a sideline seat and encouraged it, for example, with public emails thanking individuals for their support. No attempt was made by the administration to directly address the content of the published letter. Their silence was effective in shifting the focus away from the alleged abusive and bullying behavior suffered by the authors of the published letter.

The individuals in support of the administration were, for the most part, silent on the specifics of the alleged abuse. Instead, the focus was on the anonymity of the published letter. The claim of outrage appeared to settle on the issue that anonymity was not fair to the administrators as they were placed in a position of not being able to respond in kind. Ironically, anonymity was upheld with much righteousness by administration when claims were made against faculty members by students. The basis for their position was the power differential between the two parties. However, the same reasoning was refuted later by the administration with regard to faculty members and administrators even though the power differential paralleled that of the student/faculty situation. Moreover, in some ways, one might argue that the possible consequences for the faculty member were much more severe.

An extraordinary meeting of all faculty members was called with no identified agenda. Inquiries as to the matter to be discussed at the meeting were not addressed. Attendance was less than membership within the sector would have dictated. It was clear faculty members wanted to distance themselves. The administrator used the meeting to announce no resignations were forthcoming by the administrators, and a legal action was intended against the authors of the published letter. When questioned whom they intended to sue given the unknown identity of the authors and the student newspaper's apology for publication of the letter, the administrator quickly backpedaled, stating the matter was in hands of a third party. The meeting agenda was apparently completed; however, the administrator waited (with the faculty in attendance wondering why). Finally, one individual who had expressed concern about the anonymity of the letter spoke. The administrator showed visible signs of relief and pleasure. It would appear that what was wanted was finally happening. The individual spoke in terms of writing a letter in support of the administration. One or two other individuals who held administrative roles in the sector spoke in support of this action. In response, another faculty member cautioned faculty not to join a witch hunt with administrators; rather, collegiality among faculty members needed to be maintained. This remark was not welcomed by the administrator, and the meeting was brought to a close.

The campaign to write a letter and secure multiple faculty signatures began. The pressure to sign was very strong. The union was

placed in a position of reminding faculty members that they had a choice and they should not be made to feel their position was in danger if they did not sign. A letter was drafted without input from faculty members, other than those who campaigned for the initial need of a letter. The letter's content was questioned by at least one faculty member who requested an opportunity to discuss the content, but the request was not honored. The letter was forwarded to the senior administration of the institution, the named administrators, and the editor of the student newspaper.

The distribution of the letter to the named administrators effectively created a hit list. All faculty members who did not sign were now faculty members to be dealt with by the administration. Given that the signed letter initially had not been made public to all faculty members (nor to the union), there was suspicion among faculty members as to which camp colleagues belonged to, and, under these conditions, there was no neutral camp. The letter ensured that administrative practice would continue without further public challenge or attempts at investigation.

If faculty members had not received this message, then the subsequent actions of the senior administration ensured that it was heard. In the fall of 2005, senior administration made public via an email to the administrator of the sector, with instructions to transmit the message to all teaching and administrative personnel of the sector, the discipline of two faculty members who were identified by name. It was widely suspected that these individuals were the authors of the published letter, although nothing was known for sure. Even the senior administrator could not demonstrate with any certainty the authorship of the published letter. The email did not contribute to the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment or promote collegiality. Rather, an abusive and intimidating exercise of power was occurring.

The Aftermath

The practice, or at least the perceived practice, of abusive administration is destructive on many levels. The organization cannot move forward in an energetic, progressive manner. Instead, it moves in a jagged manner which discourages the full commitment of other parties to its goals and objectives. The manner in which the internal function of an organization is handled is but a mirror of how it will deal with its external components. At the individual level, professionals will only tolerate the dismantling of professionalization for so long before fighting back. When the backlash occurs, the casualties will be numerous. Collegiality is reduced to groupings with restricted entry. Professional productivity is minimized as a result of physical and mental battle fatigue.

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