Chapter 10
Instruction Expanded:
Culturally–Mediated Talent Development and Inclusive Access

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusiveness encompasses more than just the integration of students with special needs into the general education setting. It involves modifying and reorienting access to the curriculum so that the learning experience encourages talent development that reinforces scholarly traits that are reflective of the needs, interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds of the learners in the classroom. In this chapter, the authors overlay two instructional strategies for classroom teachers—scholarly traits and the talent development model—and articulate how they can reinforce the building blocks of a culturally mediated and inclusive learning environment that broadens access to the curriculum. The goal of this chapter is to model how research-based pedagogical strategies can be altered to intersect, tailored to reinforce, and reworked to be responsive using aspects of universal design for learning and culturally-mediated instructional practices to create inclusive learning experiences for all students.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INCLUSION AND EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR TEACHERS

The need for equity pedagogy and inclusivity is not new. For decades educational theorists and classroom practitioners have argued that experiences for some learners have not been equal or equitable to that of others. In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in response to the growing concern that the education for learners with special needs was not equal to that of their peers. The IDEA consisted of several key requirements; one of which focused specifically on the learning environment or the setting in which students would receive their instruction. Defined as the least restrictive environment, this requirement stated that children with disabilities should be educated with general learners "to the maximum extent possible" (Lipkin, et. al, 2015, p. 1651). This requirement led to the creation of the term inclusion. Inclusion was first presented as a pedagogical practice in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs and became a globally mandated practice in 2006 by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Krischler et al, 2019). Inclusion can be defined both specifically (placement) and generally (social and academic needs). Placement inclusion refers to the location where students receive their instruction and involve the integration of students with special needs into the general classroom (Krischler et al, 2019). Inclusion can also be generalized to include the relationship that *all* learners have with the learning experience. Under this definition, the learning experience has been designed to promote active engagement in all learners with support in place to help all learners reach their learning goals (Krischler et al, 2019). The connection between inclusion and equity under the general definition is critical. Francisco, et. al, (2020) contend that inclusion benefits *all* learners, not just learners with special needs. However, that does not mean that we can treat all students in the same manner. Pedagogical practices must be modified to account for the specific needs of English Learners, students of color, students in rural areas, students from low socio-economic households, and students with disabilities.

Culturally Mediated Instruction: A Move Towards Inclusive Access

Inclusion can no longer respond solely to students who are special needs but must consider the needs of students who have been historically underserved and systemically marginalized. These needs include the inclusion of the linguistic and cultural plurality that exists in our classrooms. Culture represents behaviors and beliefs that are learned and exhibited by groups of people (Yosso, 2005). Culture is then shared through the development of concrete and abstract products. Yoon (2020) argues that students

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