Innovation And Change Case Study
Building An Inclusive School
(Peterson, 2001)

You will work in a group through an innovation and change simulation. You will be given scenarios about planning for and implementing more effective practices for including students with disabilities in regular education. Your planning group will have opportunities to work in the context of the class during the course.

Report format

You will develop a paper with your group in which you describe your participation in a process of school improvement and change moving towards inclusive schooling for diverse learners. This will include three components:

1. **Three year plan for change**: articulation of a three-year plan for developing a unified system of regular and special education that supports inclusive schooling for all students;
2. **Presentation and report to the PTA**: a presentation and report that your group will plan for the PTA at the end of your simulated school year.
3. **Reflections and analysis**: reflections regarding this process, issues with which you dealt, your analysis, thoughts, and recommendations regarding inclusive education and the change process in schools.

Each group will include information that summarizes the various roles and responsibilities of the group members in the project development and documentation. An outline for the overall paper is provided as a suggested format.

Suggested steps

Form as a group and identify the roles that people in your group will play. Fill these out on the sheet provided. You need to have at least a parent, special education teacher, and regular education teachers. Preferably do not play more than one role. You will function as an interdisciplinary child study team. Identify someone who will act as a FACILITATOR AND RECORDER of your discussions.

Read over the case study. Note that you have been provided three situations that span the course of a year. Think of your group as the school committee for inclusive education that meets over a year’s time. Consider each task and situation in order.

**Developing the change plan**: To develop the change plan, consider the summary ideas on change provided below about change. Brainstorm and finalize in order the following:

- **Present status**: describe a picture of how the school functions now.
- **Vision/goals--where are you going**: Remember, your task is to move towards inclusive education where the Goal is for ALL students with disabilities to be included to the benefit of all in regular classes where SUPPORT is provided in regular education (e.g. special education services, peer
supports, etc.). Given this, describe how you want supports to be provided, how planning will occur with students, etc.

Strategies for change:

Review the ideas for change listed below. Brainstorm and add some of your own thoughts and ideas. With further discussion, identify and list those specific strategies you want to use. Then develop a rough timeline (e.g., when will things occur), responsibilities of people in the process, and resources needed.

Develop this into a written report.

**PTA program and report**  Your committee is making the assumption that the year has gone well thought there have been some problems. The following steps may be helpful.

Describe briefly where you see the school at this point. (Remember your vision. You should be on the way to reaching this vision.) Recount for yourself (remember, put yourself in “role” as if you are looking back over the year) what of the plan has been accomplished, some problems that were addressed. Create any other ‘imagined” happenings. This will help you know what you want to tell the PTA.

Brainstorm the kinds of things you want to communicate to the PTA—e.g., accomplishments, dealing with issues, responding to concerns that people may have, highlighting teachers and students, celebrating, etc.

Develop the program describing *what will be done and said by whom*. Provide a brief rationale.

**Ideas about change in building inclusive schools**

- The key is attitudes, values, beliefs, and visions of the school staff. Once this is in place, developing skills, making changes in how supports are used comes easier. Until this happens, efforts will likely be subverted no matter what is done.
- But you can’t begin with everyone at first. Identify volunteers—the pioneers—who may be interested in trying out this new effort. This applies to both teachers and parents of children.
- Begin doing inclusive education soon with a few students—a pilot test. Insure that this is successful.
- Deal with systems issues simultaneously with specific students. Begin shifting how support resources are used and develop a plan for larger shifts of resources—e.g., using special education teachers to support regular education teachers in the classroom, supervise similar efforts of paraprofessionals, coordinate involvement of related services personnel in the regular class (speech therapists, etc.).
- Develop building support teams that look at issues and needs of individual children as well as issues with the school as a whole.
- Set a leadership direction. The principal in the school is critical. The commitment and positive, proactive, child-centered leadership of those involved is very important.
- In-service and support from an outside consultant are often important. Such individuals can provide a different perspective, help negotiate internal politics, provide resources, and help develop staff skills.
Scenario for Building an Inclusive School
(Peterson, 2001)

You are a teacher in a low income school in a large city that has a high percentage of poor and minority students. Over the last twenty years, the neighborhood has gradually changed from some 95% Caucasian to a preponderance of Black, Latino, and immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries. The school district has gone through some tough times with an eroding base of property taxes. In general, the district does not have a positive reputation with its constituents. Most of the buildings are very old. The curriculum is based on typical lecture and testing methods. Student dropout rates have been high. Neither administration nor staff has been seen as innovative or responsive to the community.

During the last three years, a new superintendent has been hired after the election of a new school board. Together, they have begun to forge a plan to improve education for the district. This plan has been articulated in a document whose theme is Building Learning Communities for the 21st Century. This plan has several key elements that include the following:

1. Movement to site-based management where decisions are in the hands of educators and community representatives at the building level within parameters set by the administration and the school board.
2. Movement towards interdisciplinary teaching, cooperative learning, authentic curriculum, and community-based learning--all linked curriculum reform efforts.
3. A commitment to building learning communities composed of heterogeneous classes of diverse learners--moving away from the many "tracking" programs in the school.

As part of this school reform process, the district has agreed to support a movement towards inclusive schooling—the intent to use resources to support students with diverse cultures and abilities in learning together. The development of a unified school district where special and regular education work together is part of this process. Within the district, an overall District Council for Inclusive Schooling has been established to look at how to provide supports for diversity overall. However, their first charge is to redesign special education services for the district. This committee has school personnel, parents, and people with disabilities, representatives of the community at large, and representatives from each building in the district. Its charge is to assist in planning and monitoring an ongoing process of change in the district. At each building, a Building Committee for Inclusive Schooling is being established. This committee will include teachers, special education personnel, the principal, and parents from the building. It will develop and coordinate plans for the building for providing in-class support services and facilitating change in roles in the building. Presently in your building, there are three resource rooms for students with learning disabilities and emotional impairments where students go to get special help. They go to the resource room for time periods ranging from 30 minutes per week to as much as 60% of their school time. There are also two self-contained classrooms for students with mental retardation. Many students, including students with autism and physical handicaps, are presently being sent to separate schools.