

## LOOKING BACK AND GOING FORWARD!!

### *Towards Creating Good Schools for ALL*

Our journey together is ending now and it's time to part. We thought it might be good to help you look back at where we've been and then part with well wishes for your future as an inclusive teacher. We'll also propose a few reflective questions for you to consider as you look to the future.

First, the most fundamental question is this: *Do you want to be a whole schooling teacher? If so, why? If not, why not? If you're still not sure, why is that?*

Second, if you think whole schooling is a good idea, then another question naturally follows: *What exactly are you willing to do to help quality whole schooling become a reality?* For good or for bad, it is likely, even if you are in a school that has been working towards whole schooling for awhile, that you now know more than most educators you will meet about whole schooling. With knowledge comes responsibility. *What steps will you take? What's your intent and plan?* You might want to review ideas for teacher leadership presented in chapter one again as you think about this question.

You may remember that we spent several chapters exploring the reasons for whole schooling (chapter 1) and what research says (chapter 2). Together, we looked at an image of schooling that works for all children, rather than considering some children as less worthy. Throughout the book, we've presented a central theme that we could summarize this way: *good teaching and inclusive teaching are literally the same thing. When we use practices that help all children learn together, these are the same practices that promote the highest levels of learning and human development for all.* We began considering this thesis in Chapter 2 where we sketched out strategies for inclusive teaching. We pursued this further as we explored ways of thinking about differentiating for individual students in Chapter 4. Of course, the rest of the book expanded on this theme. *What do you think about this central thesis? Is good teaching inclusive teaching? Or is 'inclusion' of special students a strange and unique undertaking that has little to do with teaching for a 'regular' students? Why do you think the way you do?*

Beginning in Chapters 5 and 6, we explored how parents and teachers and specialists can collaborate to provide mutual support and provide assistance to all learners. This calls for developing a true professional community in the school. *How might you use this information in a school to help create support for all students learning together?*

Beginning in Chapter 7, we delved into the key components of teaching – organizing the classroom, dealing with student social, and emotional needs, and designing academic instruction based on strategies that allow students with diverse abilities and characteristics to learn well together. In Chapters 7 and 8 we discussed how we can organize a classroom for active, inclusive learning and use assistive technology to increase learning for all students. *How will you organize your classroom and use resources to promote inclusive teaching? What have you learned?*

In Chapters 9 and 10, we dealt with the social and emotional needs of students. A key thesis in those chapters is this: *we need to build a caring, mutually respectful community in our classrooms*. To the degree we do this, student learning will increase and our problems with student behaviors will decrease. We discussed what to do to support those students who have challenging behaviors in a respectful caring manner. *What specific strategies will you use to build community in your classroom? How will you deal with conflicts and behavioral challenges to help students learn in a way that is positive and proactive? Do you believe, in fact, that we should be working to include students who have behavioral challenges? Why or why not? What will you do to put this belief into practice?*

Finally, in Chapters 11-13, we explored strategies for academic learning. We explored ways to design lessons so they are naturally inclusive and ways to use tiered lessons and individual differentiation. Finally, we glimpsed at some practicalities of how this looks in different subject areas. *What strategies will you use to develop multilevel and inclusive lessons? How will you gather resources to solve problems and to improve your skills in multilevel lesson design over time?*

Well that's it and that was a lot!! You are to be congratulated if you've come to this resting point on the journey with a new vision of what teaching can be!! **Truth is, students and the world need you.** We need people committed to creating success, respect, and care for all people. For out of that comes students who live full and successful lives; and a better place for us all to live.

At this point, we want you to know we've been honored to journey with you. The journey has been hard and exciting and confusing all at the same. At it's end you may have more questions than when we began. We certainly do. But, ah yes!! We've heard that happens when learning is at it's best.

So the real journey is about to begin. We look forward to visiting you one day in your class, watching you engage kids of various races, cultures, and abilities, seeing you in a discussion with a group of teachers in your school as you ponder over the student problem of the day and rejoice in an amazing turn of learning and growth, listening as you share at a conference with a team of students, parents, and teachers from your



school the amazing wonders of growth, laughter, pain, sorrow, and learning in your whole schooling classroom. We look forward to learning new lessons from you on those days. We'll smile and greet you knowing that, at the end, courage and comradeship are what really matters.

Till then,

We are Michael and Mishael