

# Introduction

**A**s school districts implement teacher evaluation systems in schools, evaluators and teachers need access to current thinking on evidence-based practices for educating English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities, particularly in general education classrooms. The growing number of ELs and students with disabilities represents a significant percentage of the PreK–12 student population. Taken together, these students’ strengths as well as challenges must be considered not only in instruction and assessment but also as an integral part of teacher evaluation systems.

Evaluators and teachers need to understand the complex concepts of culture and second language acquisition as well the principles of universal design for learning and the use of accommodations that might be apparent in classrooms that include these learners. At the same time, evaluators must be aware of the value of collaboration and professional coteaching relationships for these student populations in the teacher evaluation process. Without these central understandings, evaluators cannot adequately evaluate the teaching of diverse learners they witness.

This book, applicable as a companion to any teacher evaluation system, is designed for evaluators, for teachers, and for professional developers at all levels in PreK–12 education and for administrative leadership programs and policymakers who are interested in strengthening the implementation of teacher evaluation systems to include all learners. As the nationwide implementation of teacher evaluation systems continues, the need for this book only increases. Since the book is designed for the full inclusion of *all* learners, the book’s practical appeal will ultimately increase quality access to the general education curriculum for ELs and for students with disabilities.

The topic of evaluating teaching in inclusive classrooms for ELs and students with disabilities is presented in a detailed and comprehensive manner and is based on case studies that could be used in any setting. The case study scenarios provide sample conversations from pre- and post-observations as well as descriptions of classroom environments, events

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and activities, and teaching. The case studies can be used in schools and in undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as by professional developers to describe and discuss the teacher evaluation process in school faculty, team, and grade-level meetings to examine evidence-based practice for reaching and teaching all learners. The book examines the unique strengths and challenges that each group of students presents separately in classrooms but also finds commonality in characteristics shared by effective teachers of both groups of diverse learners.

The book's eight chapters are framed within relevant research and also contain practical applications for teachers as well as evaluators. Many of the chapters contain quotations from evaluators in the field. Chapters 1 through 3 first prepare a solid foundation for recognizing the urgency to effectively teach ELs and students with disabilities so as to provide teachers and evaluators a shared frame of reference. Then, Chapters 4 through 7 highlight areas in which ELs and students with disabilities have faced inequitable education by providing a deeper examination of the four new principles of inclusive teacher evaluation that address each of these areas. Each chapter in Chapters 4 through 7 follows a similar organizational structure to define and apply one principle per chapter. Chapter 8 focuses on embodying the four principles through the coaching of teachers of diverse learners. The following overview of the chapters provides an orientation to the content and structure of the book.

### **Chapter 1. Need for an Inclusive Teacher Evaluation Framework:**

This chapter creates a sense of urgency around the need to include ELs and students with special needs in the teacher evaluation process. It provides demographics on both groups of students as well as these students' achievement gaps. It also shares insights into research and current practices in terms of teacher evaluation taking place in the United States today. This chapter concludes with four principles of inclusive teacher evaluation framing successful teacher evaluation systems that empower teachers to become better practitioners for ELs and students with disabilities. These principles are exemplified and woven throughout the remainder of the book.

### **Chapter 2. Foundations of Education of English Learners:**

This chapter builds a basic foundation for EL education. It sets the tone for inclusively educating ELs by highlighting relevant legislation that sets a precedent for the effective education of ELs. The chapter also provides a research-based view of second language acquisition as well as current practices for educating ELs in various settings (e.g., dual language, bilingual education, sheltered English immersion, English for speakers of other

languages support, etc.). The chapter serves to orient the reader to examples of effective practice in teaching a wide variety of ELs who are in classrooms across the United States.

**Chapter 3. Foundations of Education of Students With Disabilities:** In this chapter, a brief historical overview of law and regulation regarding students with disabilities is followed by an effort to connect public mandates with evaluation systems for students with disabilities and the argument for inclusive classrooms. Perspectives of students with disabilities are considered, as is literature regarding effective classroom practices for this population of students and the evidence for including all learners, PreK–12. Necessary preconditions for schools and school districts for the successful achievement of students with disabilities are described and examined. Professional development as well as the structures necessary for the success of this population of student are described. Twenty-first-century skills are examined for their impact on the achievement of students with disabilities.

**Chapter 4. Principle 1: Committing to Equal Access for All Learners:** This chapter focuses on the components of Principle 1. The chapter first underscores the need for this principle, which provides a foundation for inclusive teacher evaluation of all diverse students and also specifically for ELs and students with disabilities. The chapter focuses on the process of using Principle 1 to begin teacher evaluation, describing how and when to incorporate Principle 1 into an inclusive teacher evaluation system. The chapter then provides specific sample “look-fors” for teachers of ELs, for teachers of students with disabilities, and for teachers of both groups of students to support the use of Principle 1. A sample rubric from Rhode Island shows how Principle 1 can be operationalized in an authentic teacher evaluation system. Scenarios follow that highlight dialogues between teachers and evaluators that exemplify how Principle 1 could unfold. Chapter 1 ends with questions that educators can use to reflect on their approach to the elements of advocacy and equity for ELs and students with disabilities that Principle 1 embodies.

**Chapter 5. Principle 2: Preparing to Support Diverse Learners:** The chapter focuses on Principle 2, beginning with the need for teachers to have dispositions that position them to effectively teach ELs and students with disabilities. Principle 2 is then examined in light of how it can affect the education of ELs and students with disabilities as well as the processes necessary for establishing the principle in the evaluation of educators working with these populations of students. The chapter places

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an emphasis on what evaluators can expect to see in classes where all students are included, centering on the need for active and language-rich classrooms as well as the development of student-centered strategies. A sample rubric from Rhode Island sheds light on how one state has incorporated some understandings of Principle 2 into its teacher evaluation system. Principle 2 look-fors and sample teacher/evaluator scenarios follow that contribute to support how Principle 2 can be operationalized in the school setting.

**Chapter 6. Principle 3: Reflective Teaching Using Evidence-Based Strategies:** This chapter focuses on Principle 3 and teachers' levels of skill in using effective strategies with ELs and students with disabilities. The chapter highlights types of classroom strategies for ELs and students with disabilities that might be present and observable by evaluators, including an emphasis on universal design for learning. A series of identifiable look-fors is provided that pertains to teachers of ELs, teachers of students with disabilities, and both groups of students that evaluators can witness in inclusive classrooms. A sample rubric from New York State exemplifies how elements of Principle 3 can be incorporated into an authentic teacher evaluation rubric. Scenarios at the end of the chapter highlight how explicit evidence for Principle 3 can be found in the evaluation process. Reflective questions at the end of the chapter allow evaluators and teachers space to consider the extent to which they incorporate Principle 3 into their teacher evaluation systems.

**Chapter 7. Principle 4: Building a Culture of Collaboration and Community:** This chapter describes Principle 4 and the need for developing the means to cultivate close connections between all the individuals who know and serve diverse students. The chapter also includes a focus on acquiring greater understanding of professional, collaborative, and community relationships. Regular connections with families of these populations of students are examined as well as the means to full, equitable, and culturally and individually responsive collaboration that includes advocacy for diverse learners. The chapter follows with a set of look-fors that teachers and evaluators can use as evidence when creating strong collaboration and a sense of community in schools to support diverse learners. The chapter then includes a sample rubric from New York State that incorporates tenets of Principle 4. It also contains sample conversations between evaluators and teachers of ELs and students with disabilities to illustrate how Principle 4 can be embodied during evaluation as well as culminating reflective questions.

**Chapter 8. Empowering Educators Through Coaching:** The final chapter sets the four principles examined in this book in the practical context of implementing, through coaching, teacher evaluation protocols that are inclusive of all learners. The chapter first provides a definition of coaching for teachers of diverse learners as well as the circumstances under which coaching through teacher evaluation protocols can most likely succeed. The chapter then discusses why coaching is needed as a construct within schools and how evaluators can successfully help create higher-performing teachers and more effective classrooms for ELs and students with disabilities. The implications of well-designed and thoughtfully developed coaching strategies for improved student outcomes for ELs and students with disabilities are discussed next. Finally, a series of considerations for evaluators and teachers as part of establishing coaching relationships is provided.