

## Audio Transcript for “A Multi-Year Phased Approach to Inclusive Systems Change”

Slides 10-11 (Carol Quirk, CEO of MCIE)

MCIE has worked with over 150 schools across multiple states to build inclusive practices.

These systems change prerequisites are not particular to inclusion or even education, but we have found them not only to be in the literature, but to actually be true, and it begins with commitment.

Of course, the commitment of the principal to promote inclusive practice is important.

But even when the principal has successfully led a school to include all of its children, that commitment to maintain and sustain that practice overtime will be dependent on that principal.

And if that principal is moved, retires or changes their employment, the practices within that school will be influenced by the new principal.

So, we need inclusion to be led by the district.

If we're also thinking about including all children, especially those who may have been sent to regional programs, we need to bring those children back to the school that they would have attended if they didn't have the disability. And so, at the district level we need leaders who are communicating across schools.

To share the vision and share the practice and help administrators in making their change.

So, we need the Superintendent and we need both general and special ed leadership on board.

Inclusion happens in general ed places with general ed teachers and students who don't receive services.

So, the participation of general education is absolutely critical.

We need the principal to be on board for multiple years or that the district will commit and support successive principals in continuing with the vision and the practice.

Now in our work we have found that having a partnership is critical, so I as the MCIE director will partner with the district directors and our facilitators (our staff) will partner with district level coaches who you'll hear from today.

The key is collaboration.

We collaborate in the roles we take. We collaborate in the time we share. And we collaborate in the process that we use together.

Systems change begins at the district level. Communicating the vision and designing shared understanding is something that I have found to be more difficult than you would imagine.

I've been working with some states as well as districts and schools, and developing that shared understanding is an ongoing process.

It's not something where you can tell people this is what you're aiming for, and they will suddenly get on that path.

But there are a lot of ways that you can design an opportunity for that conversation.

We have district level action planning teams that meet on a regular basis and part of that activity needs to be engaging in that conversation of what it looks like in the school and in the class and among educators.

I know in some states that I've worked with the state leaders will say well, why are we talking about what teachers are doing in a classroom when we are trying to make state policy?

Well, that policy needs to be grounded in what happens in a classroom if it's going to have a positive influence.

School based action planning in our experience, takes three years.

In our three-year process we spend the first year getting ready.

Developing that shared understanding.

Providing professional learning opportunities based on time and availability of staff examining the current data and engaging with staff on an individual and schoolwide basis to learn what their priorities are and to understand what is important to them.

We also need to learn where students are and how students are doing in the school building.

In that first year, we asked schools to target grades for change.

We've learned that if you target students and say, disband a regional program, you're affecting way too many teachers and way too many resources have to be redeployed.

But in a school building if we target, say, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, we can organize the change in roles in relationships among just the third and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to start with.

And then in the second year, while we're supporting that third and 4th grade plan for the rest of the school.

Targeted professional learning opportunities through PLCs or through other means of like a book study are important, but it's also important that we have some schoolwide engagement with knowledge acquisition.

We also want schools to look at their practices and identify what needs to be changed.

The biggest change area is in how time is used, is their collaborative planning time built into the master schedule, are students assigned in natural proportions or clumped into one class?

Are teachers expected to collaborate and do they have the tools to do so?

And then what about the students who present the biggest challenges? Students with behavioral challenges, students who have significant intellectual or cognitive disabilities, students with multiple and medical disabilities.

There are student planning tools.

We don't need to say, "Well, not that student." What we do need to say is "let's plan!" And only if we cannot figure it out would we remove that student from opportunity to learn in the general ed class.

I can tell you over hundreds and hundreds of children for whom MCIE has planned.

I can count on one hand the children that we have said in with the team,

"I'm not sure we're ready to include the student."

Not that the student wasn't ready, but that we weren't ready. And we have taken more time and put more resources in places or figured out what the instruction needed to be in order to be successful.

Slides 15-17 (Carol Quirk, CEO of MCIE)

This chart represents districts across one state and this was 20 years ago.

So, in these districts the yellow bars indicate the districts that MCIE ended up working with systemically.

Now this data is the LRE A data, that's what we call it in Maryland, and in some other states it is the percent of children who are in general ed placements 80% or more of the time.

Now we know that place is only one of four characteristics, but it is the only good measure that we have to compare districts or compare states.

Now, nearly 20 years later, we will see a difference in how those districts are doing.

So, after three to five years of working with MCE and employing our systems change process, those districts are now among the highest in placing students, 80% or more of the time in General Ed, and that's all students in their home school.

Now this data is 2017 eighteen and I can tell you that those districts have maintained that high rate of inclusion.

You'll see that they're well over 80%, and one of them is over 90%.

So we know that between 80 and 90% of all children with disabilities who belong to a school can be successfully included.

"Now, who are those other 10%," you might ask?

Generally, those are students who have significant behavioral challenges.

For whom we adults have not yet figured out how to support them and provide the services in a general ed setting.

A few of them may be students with such significant medical needs that they are not benefiting from being in general education.

For example, if they're having uncontrolled seizures and sleeping through a major part of the day,

But other than that, almost each and every child can be included at least 80% or more of the day.

This chart represents one district's journey to inclusive education. You can see here; the blue bars represent the time in which they were engaged with MCIE, their rate of change.

They were already progressing, dramatically increased from a low of 51% to a high of over 90%.

What's important here is that while we discontinued our engagement because they didn't need us anymore, they were able to maintain their high rate of inclusive placement for well over 10 years.

For more information visit [mcie.org](http://mcie.org) or email us at [mcie@mcie.org](mailto:mcie@mcie.org)