

Preface

This book provides information about and insight into challenges facing students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) communities and their families. It also provides leadership methods that can be applied by readers who are in positions to make change and address these challenges. This book guides members of the educational community—teachers, principals, other professional school staff, paraprofessionals, and parents – toward those strategies that can best support CLD families and address the learning needs of students with special needs from these families.

School leaders serve a pivotal role in academic achievement of students from CLD with disabilities. They must shape an environment that takes responsibility to ensure a safe and accepting institutional culture for all students, ensuring that students with different disabilities and exceptionalities are being identified, recognized, and diagnosed, and ensures that their learning needs are met through effective teamwork provided by key members of the school community. As such, the challenges of students and their families and roles of the leaders with attention to a specific dimension among CLD students with disabilities are discussed. Intersectionality across students with disabilities, other areas of difference, including (not limited to) ability/disability, linguistic diversity, race, immigration status, and traumatic experiences. Guidelines are provided based upon empirical research findings and emergent themes to give school leaders a professional perspective related to a significant group of CLD that has not been studied before; the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asian (MENASWA) families and their children who have disabilities.

This book places emphasis on one group of CLD and describes the experiences of families of MENASWA and their children who have been identified and referred to programs within the U.S. Special Education system where any correlations with specific demographic data were determined. The book also attempted to determine which strategies for serving students

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with disabilities are most helpful, as perceived by one of the CLD groups: MENASWA families. Based on specific Research Questions and Hypotheses, this research seeks to identify any impact that various demographic factors have related to MENASWA families and their cross-cultural understanding of disability. MENASWA families and school partnerships, their perception on their school's cultural competency, their identification of challenges related to their children's special education program, and their identification of recommendations related to their children's special education program are addressed in this book. The researcher utilized sequential mixed methodology (both quantitative and qualitative) to learn about this understudied population and to collect data on what is currently happening in schools. The research is scientifically accurate and has been tested for validity and reliability.

The researcher also used a phenomenological approach to learn more about the populations associated with this study. All research and related data reflected in this study have guided the authors in the creation of effective training programs and approaches designed to educate teachers and administrators on how they can better support CLD families and their students by joining together to form family/school partnerships that provide a mutual understanding of the need for such significant change in school systems throughout the United States on behalf of these children.

KEY TERMS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Ableism, Acculturation, Authentic, CLD, Collaboration, Constituents, Coteaching, Cultural Competency/ Proficiency, Disability/Special needs, Empathic, IEP, IDEA, Inclusive Education/Inclusion, Learning organization, MENASWA, Mental models, NCLB, PreK-12, School community, Special Education, Student/child with Special needs, Systems thinking, Team learning.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT AREA AND THIS BOOK

When children with disabilities and learning challenges are identified, the educational community in the United States diligently applies a well-established model of remediation that has, for the most part, yielded positive results. Research, however, has demonstrated that the American perspective of "disability" may vary, to some extent significantly, from that of those in Eastern cultures. These cultural differences can play a significant role in the

failure to achieve learning success on behalf of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) This work brings awareness of, and attention to, this disconnect, and offers the guidance necessary for schools and parents to work together as a team to better support families of students with disabilities from these CLD areas of the world. If the prevailing culture in this country's educational system is to work on behalf of all students, it is critical for the school community to recognize and acknowledge these differences and bring them into alignment, in order to meet these students' learning needs.

There is an abundance of literature available to special education; the identification of special needs students, the establishment of IEP teams, steps and strategies for creating IEPs for individual students that address their learning needs, and the legal ramifications for meeting the requirements of the Education for All Handicapped Act, to name a few. What is missing in the literature is a comprehensive understanding of the critical role that cultural diversity plays in arriving at successful outcomes on behalf of every child identified as needing special help. Absent from the literature is research generating information about students from CLD students and their family experiences, particularly from Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia.

The intent of this book is also to coach readers to learn to engage in leadership practices leading toward more inclusive, socially just schooling. Not only does this book provoke the awareness of such a need (the "what"), but it provides meaningful direction using leadership and teamwork to meet the learning needs of this very special classification of students (the "how"), which is absent from any current literature.

Learning Challenges for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students with Disabilities sets forth the fundamental right of every child in the United States to be afforded the same opportunity to receive an effective education regardless of their special classification. It covers a breadth of topics relating to special education, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and families. The actual creation of such a program can be achieved by working together as authors/practitioners, collaborating with educational consulting groups, and working closely with practicing school administrators to join together in support of this endeavor. Being in a position to approach school leaders with relevant data, rather than merely seeking a sympathetic ear, is powerful and impactful. CLD families, particularly MENASWA families, will come to understand that they are called upon to be critical members of a team and play a meaningful role in meeting their children's unique needs, and their voice will be heard when data-driven decisions are made at the school level.

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Learning Challenges for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students with Disabilities is designed to generate improved practices working with students with special needs and understanding special education. The primary audience for this book is a PK-12 audience, including teachers, administrators, and other leaders in the American education community at every level of education.

Readers who are part of one or more following categories, are in the right place to read and promote this work: College students in a credential program, PK-12 administrators, PK-12 teachers, special education groups, ELL groups, member of a disability organization, part of training programs for school staff development, an educational consulting company or initiative, a member of a family of a student with special needs, or an activist for rights of education for all. University professors who prepare new teachers in special education, State departments of education, law makers, instructional coaches, and consultants, and encourage them to avail themselves of the information provided in this book so that learning, attitudes, and understanding can bring about change in our American educational institutions.

Moreover, this book will help working practitioners gain some information addressing specific areas of disability, learn strategies for improving the home-school collaboration, and be more comfortable with issues related to special education law. It also motivates administrators, other school leaders, and legislators to support those working in special education to bring about change and collaborate with teachers about best practices and effective communication. The book provides a clear understanding of the important legal aspects of special education, the recognition of differences in disability areas, and the search for strategies that ensure inclusive practices.

The authors hope that, *Learning Challenges for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students with Disabilities* is adapted by educational institutions as a source for new course adoption. It is believed that this work provides a valuable resource for those working in special education or by any individual who is interested in learning how to improve cultural based co-teaching practices by better understanding students with special needs from different CLD backgrounds, pedagogical and content strategies. In addition, it could be used in staff development or other training workshops on improving outcomes for special education. Trainers will be able to use the research-based information and strategies with audiences struggling to understand how to create and maintain inclusive programs for students in special education.

The platform of this work is an authored book with research insight that can be used in institutions, such as colleges of education, centers for teaching and

learning (CTL), The Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (MEIS) Programs, Child Development Institutes, Regional Centers, Centers for Immigration Studies, and SPEC courses in colleges. It can also benefit all schools in which Middle Eastern and North African populations are residing such as following areas: California, Cambridge, Chicago, Massachusetts, Michigan, Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, The Woodlands, the District of Columbia; the greater New York City area, Virginia, and Wisconsin. As a resource to learn about special education in the U.S., this book can be used for different research institutes around the globe.

Learning Challenges for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students with Disabilities can be applied and adapted to other populations. School administrators can apply the results of this study, in conjunction with three conceptual frameworks related to the study, to recognize the need to (a) see CLD families in a broader context within their community, (b) respect disabilities as a social model with a focus on strengths, rather than a medical model focused on needs and weaknesses, and (c) identify ways in which CLD families can be involved with schools to help build educators' cultural competence.

The nucleus of the research inside this book has not been published; however, some areas of the study appear elsewhere. The general emphasis of one significant CLD population of MENASWA and the need to address their unique needs are included in a book on social justice that was published in 2018. The research throughout the content of this book is original and based upon years of national qualitative and quantitative research. It is believed that the findings can be applied to all other CLD populations, as well. As such it is hoped that this book will serve as a primary or supplementary text for any related university course or as a guide for Special Education Local Planning Areas (SELPA), Education Service Areas (ESCs), and any other institutions that support working with students in special education.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The building blocks of this book are based on the following chapters and structure. The authors take readers along on a journey of learning, as meaningful matters related to the topic are discovered. Chapters synthesize literature and provide information and backgrounds for the topic, and each chapter provides leadership insight, a summary, strategies, case studies, and notes to guide readers in their learning.

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This work contains nine chapters, each designed as a separate unit with a beginning and end. Readers are presented with a table of contents, a brief abstract, and references for each chapter. The chapters provide reviews of the literature related to the focus of this work, including search strategy and relevant content. Besides books, the following are other research tools used that relate to subject matter and leadership: EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Science Direct, Psych Articles, Google Scholar, Google, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Global Health, Ingenta Connect, and Journal Seek. The preliminary review of the literature is based on an electronic literature search, using search terms and combinations of search terms such as cultural competency, disability, ethnic categorization, ableism, and inclusivity. Search terms include culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), disproportionality in education, double jeopardy in education, family-school partnership, parental involvement, social construction of disability, social construction of parenting, cultural competency, Middle Eastern, immigrants, theories in education, UDL, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Using these keywords (both individually and in combination), relevant studies were generated from database searches and were included.

All key terms used were able to yield studies relevant to the problem and research questions. Most of the literature included was published between 2006 and 2019 to ensure that the latest findings and reports were included in the review; however, literature on the experiences of Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asian (MENASWA) families of children with disabilities in the U.S. were limited. In order to expand the results, older articles that were pertinent to the topic of MENASWA and immigration were included. Older articles were also used in the theoretical framework of the study that reflect the theoretical framework of this work.

In chapter one, readers find literature related to defining Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD) population in the U.S, along with their challenges. Experiences of different CLDs such as Latinx families, Arab American families, and the MENASWA are discovered. Within this chapter, important matters such as communication, language Issues, stigmatization with a focus on MENASWA were explained. Leadership insight related to this chapter addresses school and ethnic profiling, ending with an educational leadership case and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter two is devoted to intersectionality of disability and CLD. This chapter combines issues surrounded by two matters; CLD and disabilities providing some statistics from literature. The authors delve deeply into the meaning of having disabilities while from a CLD population in order to

understand historical and legal implications around the concept of disabilities. Phenomenon like cultural disconnects such as ableism, misidentification and disproportionality are disclosed based on the available literature. Leadership insight is provided related to inclusive practices and educating CLD students.

In chapter three, readers are guided through an understanding of theoretical models in education and the meaning of each those theories. Each emphasizes the bio-ecological theory of human development and the social model of disability and family-centered theory. In each theory, leadership insight and an opportunity to apply such insight are provided. All these theories are related to CLD populations and students.

The chapter closes with a Summary of three theoretical theories in education.

Chapter four focuses on creating partnerships between Schools and CLD families. The chapter emphasizes the significance of such partnerships and presents actions and attitudes that bring them about, including the importance of parental involvement. Cultural proficiency is addressed here, as well, which is critical in an educational setting, revealing an obvious link between involvement theory and family/school collaboration/partnerships. Opportunity is provided for the reader to apply this wisdom in a practical setting that builds the relationships needed to enlist parents as meaningful partners in the process. The chapter closes with a comprehensive summary.

Chapter five introduces a group of students with disabilities from CLD/MENASWA Families. Trends, news, and data from available literature profile their uniqueness. The chapter reveals how census confusion on these groups compromise those data related to racial identity, thereby creating potential misidentification of individuals with special education among this population. Then educational leaders and readers are presented with leadership insight and strategies that provide ways to overcome this most critical problem, and a related activity establishing successful home-school partnerships is provided.

Chapter Six focuses on the process of researching a unique CLD Population; the MENASWA. The authors believe that a book grounded in research must have information about how the research was conducted. Designing and using a correct methodology for research is the most important part of research. Not all the researchers use both quantitative and qualitative research when conducting research. For this particular study on a CLD group like MENASWA, the authors learned the importance of finding accurate demographic data about MENASWA families with children who are part of special education programs in the United States. A mixed methods design sought to gain insight into experiences, determine significant correlations to relevant demographic factors, and identify which strategies for serving

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students with disabilities are the most helpful as perceived by MENASWA families. As such, a quantitative instrument in the form of a Likert-scale survey and additional qualitative aspects, in the form of an interview, as well as open-ended questions on the survey, were utilized to address specific hypotheses related to five constructs. Each construct collected information vital to understanding the experiences of MENASWA families of children with disabilities within the special education system. Using the information obtained on each construct can enable the professional to craft a training program designed to educate teachers and administrators on how they can better support MENASWA families and serve these students. Step-by-step procedures of settings, analyses of data, the role of the researcher, and absence or presence of subjectivities and biases were described. As such, this chapter addresses a research population, data source identification and sampling, field testing, and operational definitions of the statistical tests and metrics for data analysis. The validity and reliability of the instruments are determined describing the manner in which research was conducted.

The following chapters convert research data into comprehensible concepts that provide manageable guidelines and insight as well as case studies that support the authors' central proposition; to understand cultural differences between CLD groups of MENASWA families' perspectives and attitudes related to child learning challenges and provide meaningful support and effective teaching/learning strategies that yield positive results.

Chapter Seven is related to chapter Six. This chapter analyzes the data gathered from surveys and interviews. The summary of findings related to the demographic factors of the respondents, such as age and gender, geographic background, immigration status, religious background, language proficiency, racial identity, income and education and information on student demographics were provided in appropriate tables.

This chapter is significant in term of learning about findings related to demographics and it informs the reader whether or not the results are generalizable. The authors also provide opportunity to apply leadership strategies and insights.

Each research question was analyzed based on findings and leadership application/insights and scenario provided for each of the findings. Cross cultural understudying of disabilities, family –school partnerships, school's cultural competency, challenges that MENASWA population face, and their recommendation for improvement of educational system with related quantitative tables and figures are provided. Leader Insights and discussion related to demographics and other findings are provided.

Chapter 8 focuses on five very important recommended themes based on the research conducted. These emergent themes refer to MENASWA's racial identity, resiliency and Grit, a triple threat, family engagement /involvement, and recommendation for changes to school structures and policies. Leader insight and application for each emergent theme is provided and gives voice to the population of the study, in that it presents fear of racial profiling, stereotypes, assimilation, and facing stigma and microaggression.

In chapter 9, the authors emphasize much needed policy change regarding identity choices, how schools should be more inclusive, and collaboration among members of the study's population. The role educational leadership plays in building genuine relationships with families is addressed. Authors suggest ways to improve research and literacy such as replication of similar and larger scale Studies, comparing results within different populations, and taking action by school leaders. Finally, leadership insight and action for change is presented.

The book concludes with definitions of key words, references used, and an appendix.