From Social Justice to Technocracy: Narrating Inclusive Education in the United States

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In the United States, the primary policy narrative of inclusive education has been political, seeking inclusion as ethical action under the larger banners of social justice and civil rights. During the past decade, federal accountability reform efforts combining revisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have created a new, technocratic policy narrative. This paper examines the provisions of the national educational reform and its impact on inclusive education and the education of students with disabilities.

In Richard Scotch's (2001) book, *From Good Will to Civil Rights*, he carefully documents the history of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the first national law in the United States prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities. He captures a historical moment when the way that policymakers thought about disability and the life experiences of people with disabilities changed. They set aside a traditional framework of charity and pity in order to embrace a politicized understanding of people with disabilities as a marginalized class seeking basic civil rights and liberties. Rather than viewing disabled persons as tragic individuals, as what Erving Goffman (1963) called "failed normals," this political view recast them as part of a disrespected and devalue minority group seeking full participation in education, employment, and the social life of the community.

Until recently, the driving narrative of inclusive education in the United States has embraced this political concept of disability within a morally compelling story of an excluded, misunderstood class of children and their parents pursuing inclusion as social justice (e.g. Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rosenberg, 2006; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1999). This rhetoric has expressed the goal of inclusion as a specific version of the broader American civil rights narrative whereby African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, and other political minority groups have sought legal and civil equality. The story of African-Americans, for example, achieving the right to access public restrooms, lunch counters, and ultimately public schools and universities is greatly mirrored

in the narratives of disabled Americans fighting for the accessibility of those same valued social spaces (Fleischer & Zames, 2011; Pelka, 1997; Shapiro, 1994; Stroman, 2003).

Mara Sapon-Shevin (2003, p. 26) has expressed this political narrative in ethical terms, as a mode of moral persuasion that asks educators deep questions about the ultimate purposes of education and the kind of world we hope to live in.

> (I)nclusion is not about disability, nor is it only about schools. Inclusion is about social justice. What kind of world do we want to create and how should we educate children for that world? What kinds of skills and commitments do people need to thrive in a diverse society?

At the heart of the political narrative is a moral case, a call to teachers and school leaders to scrutinize beliefs and values in order to better align the practices of schooling with the ethical commitments of a liberal, multicultural society. In this sense, the standard narrative of inclusion has been about becoming better persons and raising the ethical standards of American society. Inclusion, in this account, is the right thing for us to do.

Over the past decade or so, the political narrative of inclusive education in America has been eclipsed by a new story that, while it does not explicitly seek inclusion, has profound implications for the education of students with disabilities. It is a technocratic tale of public school accountability and academic improvement. Federal education policies, including revisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the 2001 No Child Left Behind, have re-narrated inclusion as a social by-product of a complex set of administrative efficiencies and technical achievements that systematically produce higher test scores among children. Government agencies interact with other government agencies in a hierarchy of administrative pressure, the higher levels compelling the lower levels, on a playing field of public school test score data. The goal is to produce efficiencies of human action, in school organization, classroom instruction, and student learning, as evidenced in continuous rises in standardized reading and mathematics test scores (Ravitch, 2010).

The new technocratic story does not overtly value or seek the integration of students with disabilities in general education settings. It offers no grand moral vision of friendships among diverse citizens or a community united by acceptance for human differences. It envisions human society not as a space of interactions and

relationships defined by moral pursuits but as a grand accounting ledger with behavior consequences, a data administration system where increased test scores are synonymous with improved teaching and learning. It promises to, in the words of educational historian Diane Ravitch (2010, p.11), "fix education by applying the principles of business, organization, management, law, and marketing and by developing a good data-collection system that provides the information necessary to incentivize the workforce – principals, teachers, and students – with appropriate rewards and sanctions."

Technocracy, according to social critic Neil Postman (1992, p.31) is an administrative system that achieves a "a separation of moral and intellectual values" under a program of technical control and progress. The public school, in this scheme, is not a place of moral deliberation and purpose (e.g. Noblit & Dempsey, 1996). Commonly asked questions that engage ethical reasoning, whereby educational professionals attempt to figure out what is best for the well-being and growth of young persons, lose legitimacy. They are replaced by questions that embrace values of efficiency, mathematical precision, and administrative control. Technical calculation by experts is the highest form of reasoning, the replacement for all forms of human judgment.

In a technocracy, notions of scientific progress and social improvement are conflated. Increasing trend lines based on student performance data equal educational betterment. Rising graphs and tables are the equivalent of improvements in the quality of teaching and the status of student learning. The entire educational enterprise, all that public schools are and do, are captured in graphic displays of student test scores.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the development of the technocratic narrative of national educational policy in the United States over the past decade. This paper will explore the policy provisions that make up the "technocratic approach to school reform" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 29) and examine specifically how that narrative impacts inclusive education and the schooling of students with disabilities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Prior to the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal policy on the education of students with disabilities emphasized access to public schooling without placing a high

priority on the quality of educational provision. The main victory of the 1975 Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was the federal mandate that all states provide a public education for students with disabilities without an exclusion option. Public school systems across the land were required to educate all disabled students. The law also required that schools create an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a specialized plan of study provided to each disabled child.

But EHA was relatively toothless in regard to the degree of educational benefit delivered by that individualized program. In many cases, the IEP served as a substitute for the general curriculum, a lesser alternative to the standard program of academic knowledge and skill development provided to nondisabled students. The federal policy focused more on getting students with disabilities into schools and classrooms than on achieving positive academic outcomes (Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Hehir, 2005; Kleinert, Kearns & Kennedy, 2002).

Prior to the passage of IDEA 1997, students with disabilities were routinely left out of state systems of standardized academic assessment. There was little expectation at the level of federal policy that students receiving special education services make significant academic gains or that school districts pay close attention to their educational progress. In 1991, most states did not know how many or if their students with disabilities were taking state-mandated tests. 54% of states did not keep track of participation rates for students with disabilities on state assessments (Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson, 2004). Kleinert, Kearns, and Kennedy (2002) estimated that only 50% and 60% of all students with disabilities in the United States were participating in mandatory systems of state educational assessment before the policy changes adopted by the 1997 IDEA.

In the minds of many educational leaders, operating in a climate of minimal accountability for academic achievement, the special education system was a powerful purveyor of low expectations for student learning. Kleinert, Kearns, and Kennedy (2002, p. 195) noted, “Unfortunately, one effect of excluding specific groups of students from state and district educational performance measures can be a decreased concern for what those students are learning.” Former federal director of special education Thomas Hehir (2005, p. 111) observed, “The education of students with disabilities has been plagued by low expectations, which is why many in the disability

community have sought to have students included in state and national accountability systems. The hope is that by including students in statewide assessments, more attention will be paid to assuring that these students receive quality programs." Hehir (2005, p. 111) gives the specific example of a disabled eight year old boy receiving training in fine motor development but no science instruction. "(L)ike that of too many children with disabilities, this boy's educational program concentrates inordinately on the characteristics of his disability at the expense to the curriculum."

The authors of the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA attempted to address a pair of related concerns. First, there was an impression that expectations for the academic learning of students with disabilities must be raised. Second, the problem of low expectations was viewed as intimately linked to the fact that students with disabilities often did not take the states' standardized achievement tests. States did not test students with disabilities because they expected little from them. But this logic also worked in reverse. The failure to track the academic performance of disabled students in districts and schools allowed educators to undervalue the achievement of those students (Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Hehir, 2005).

The 1997 IDEA pushed states to include students with disabilities in all state academic assessments. States were required to develop suitable adaptations and modifications of tests to meet the performance needs of these students. Also, for students for whom the adaptations did not provide reasonable access to the standard examinations, states were required to develop and utilize alternative assessments. IEP teams were entrusted with the decision of selecting the most reasonable testing accommodations or assessment alternatives for individual students. Further, the federal government mandated that states report the performance of students with disabilities on all state assessments Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson, 2004; Kleinert, Kearns & Kennedy, 2002). This sent "a clear message to everyone –teachers, administrators, and, perhaps most important, families and students themselves – that the learning of all children fundamentally matters" (Kleinert, Kearns & Kennedy, 2002, p. 207).

The 1997 reauthorization initiated a dramatic policy shift toward greater accountability for teachers, schools, and school districts for the academic achievement of students with disabilities. This shift was fortified seven years later by the 2004 IDEA (Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Hehir, 2005; Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson,

2004). The 2004 reauthorization linked explicitly with the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation to hold schools accountable for the measured progress of students with disabilities on standardized tests of reading and math. It ensured disabled students' access to and progress on the general curriculum.

> Federal policy evolved into implementation of the view that the only way students with disabilities can be viewed as successful as their peers without disabilities is to ensure that they have an opportunity to learn the same instructional content. To ensure compliance with this provision, federal policy required that a student's individualized education program (IEP) have a statement of measurable annual goals that enable the child to access, participate in, and progress in the general curriculum. Further, the school district must ensure that the IEP team reviews each child's IEP periodically to address any lack of expected progress in the general curriculum (Hardman & Dawson, 2008, p. 7)

Although the revised versions of IDEA did not create a specific mandate for students with disabilities to be included in general education classrooms, they made it increasingly difficult for school districts to adhere to the law through practices of segregation. Historically, and practically, the location of the general curriculum in American schools was the general classroom.

Taken together, the two updates in the overarching federal special education statute constituted a strong amplification of an old special education idea: students with disabilities who are often viewed as incompetent or incapable have learning potential that responds to competent instruction. In fact, if provided excellent instruction, that intellectual ability grows and advances far beyond what many educators might assume.

This was an old message with a very new twist. During the 1950's and 1960's, Samuel Kirk, the most influential figure in the passage of EHA in 1975, the man celebrated as both the "father of learning disabilities" (Chalfant, 1998, p. 3; Minskoff, 1998, p. 20) and the "father of special education" (Mather, 1998, p. 35; Minskoff, 1998, p. 20), made speeches to psychologists and educators all over the United States. In the two decades prior to the landmark federal legislation, Kirk was a tireless proselytizer who carried an uplifting message of human learning capacity and educational impact. He spoke of disabled children who had academic learning potential if provided with the proper instruction.

The 1997 and 2004 versions of IDEA picked up this standard mantra of American special education, boosted its volume, and turned it in a new direction. Kirk's claim was that students with intellectual disabilities or learning disabilities could learn to read and could make substantial academic progress if the public schools

provided them with the unique modes of instruction available within special education classes. It was special education, the small classrooms and individualized instruction, that would serve the needs of students with disabilities (Danforth, 2009; Danforth, Slocum, & Dunkle, 2010.)

Beginning in 1997, federal special education policy made a subtle but profound recalibration of the Samuel Kirk notion. In revised form, the oft-overlooked learning potential of disabled students could be developed not by special educators working in segregated classrooms designed for their disabilities. The 1997/2004 IDEA asserted that students with disabilities learn best when they access the richness and complexity of the standard academic curriculum as delivered in general education settings. Briefly put, the minds of students with disabilities would benefit more from general education instruction than traditional special education teaching.

No Child Left Behind

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, often called No Child Left Behind, is the centerpiece of the federal educational reform. The legislation mandated that all states develop a complex regime of standardized tests in reading and mathematics to be utilized in an aggressive system of top-down accountability. States were required to create their own standardized tests with three levels of performance, often termed *basic*, *proficient*, and *advanced*. Each state is allowed to define a proficient level of academic performance. Public schools must test all students in mathematics and reading in grades 3 thru 8 and once during the high school years. Based on each state's definitions of proficient mathematics and reading skill levels for each of the assessed grades, the federal government required that all students perform at proficiency level by 2014.

States, districts, and schools were ordered to disaggregate achievement data by race, ethnicity, low income status, disability, and English learners. In order to ensure that all of these sub-groups were progressing steadily toward the goal of full proficiency, states were required to create timelines detailing the standards of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Each sub-group must gradually rise toward 100% proficiency during the years leading up to 2014.

Accountability in NCLB consists more of sticks than carrots. Schools not reaching AYP for every subgroup are designated as School In Need of Improvement (SINI) and face a progressive series of administrative sanctions. One year of failure prompts a warning from the state department of education. Two successive years of SINI status results in a market-based intervention. All students in a failing school have the right to transfer to a non-failing school, and the school district must pay for the students' transportation costs. This measure frames students and families as consumers in an educational marketplace. Consumer choice, it is theorized, will push weak schools to either go out of business or improve their practices to meet the expectations of those consumers.

After three years of SINI status, a school must provide free tutoring for all low income students. Sanctions after four years include an array of corrective actions, including possible changes in curriculum and staff plus longer school days or school year.

Five years failure to meet AYP for any sub-group prompts the most dramatic action. Schools are forced to completely restructure, essentially wiping out the ineffective school and starting over from scratch. The five restructuring options including becoming a charter school, replacing principal and staff, handing control over to a private educational management company, and falling under state control. The final option is "any other major restructuring of the school's governance" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 98), a very ambiguous option chosen by most schools and districts (Elledge, Le Floch, Taylor, Anderson, 2009; Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006; Ravitch, 2010; Wong, 2008).

Consequences of Standards-Based Accountability Reform for Students with Disabilities

What are the consequences of the technocratic narrative, of standards-based accountability reform for students with disabilities in the United States? What is the impact of federal education reform on inclusive education?

The explicit purpose of these pieces of federal legislation was to increase student academic achievement, including the achievement of students with disabilities, in the areas of reading and mathematics. The federal

educational reform effort enacted in IDEA revisions and No Child Left Behind is not designed to result in inclusive education. But the two goals cannot be easily disentangled. Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson (2004, p. 1) observed, "It was thought that increased participation in assessments would result in increased inclusion in the general education curriculum; this, in turn, would lead to improved educational achievement for the students." How access to or inclusion in the general education curriculum would occur without increasing the social integration of disabled and non-disabled students is a fair question.

In their 2004 study, Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson found four positive consequences of educational reform in the education of disabled students.

1. Increased participation of students with disabilities in statewide testing programs – Even at that early point in the reform process, states were already moving quickly to bring disabled student into their standardized testing programs.
2. Higher academic expectations and standards – Teachers, families, and students had raised expectations for their learning and academic performance.
3. Improved quality of academic instruction – Specifically, more "students with disabilities are gaining increased access to the general education curriculum" (Ysseldyke, Dennison & Nelson, p. 8).
4. Improved academic performance – A small sampling of achievement data demonstrated increases in achievement.

What stands out in this early study is the authors' optimism given a relatively thin smattering of data drawn from the early implementation of NCLB. Primarily, this study reads as predictive and hopeful, anticipating the kinds of positive results targeted by the accountability reforms.

Other special educators have been less sanguine. Hardman & Dawson (2008, p. 7) have posed the question, "Will participation of students with disabilities in a standards-based curriculum result in higher educational achievement?" Lacking sufficient data to answer their question, they expressed doubt about accountability reforms that seem to promote more inclusive education. They suggested that general educators who lack the individualized focus of special educators might not be able to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

In David Connor's analysis of a decade of accountability reform in New York City, he questions whether the reforms constitute a step forward or a step back. Administrative responsibility for students with disabilities, in many cases, switched from special education leaders to general education school principals. Arguably, this put a significant dent in the special education system's monopoly on segregated school and classroom placements. The district's central administration replaced 80% of the school principals with hand-selected leaders and prepared those educators for the management tasks of the accountability reform agenda. "Part of their (the new school principals) responsibility was to have ownership for students with IEP's" (Connor, 2012, p. 34), a strong indication that general education was reconfigured to educate many students with disabilities.

New York City's reported outcome data for students with disabilities present a very positive picture. Graduation rates for students with disabilities increased from 17.1% in 2005 to over 30% in 2010. Dropout rates decreased during those same years from 34.3% to 20.9%. It would appear, based on these data, that the implementation of IDEA revisions and No Child Left Behind in New York City yielded impressive results (Connor, 2012).

Based on his analysis of the reform movement, including interviews with special education administrators, Connor questions the actual quality of the education provided for students with disabilities in the general classrooms in New York.

> There is a possibility that, at least in the short term, some students may flourish in general education settings while others flounder. Several administrators shared that the reforms moved too fast, catapulting children and youth wholesale in lees restrictive environments, such as team taught classes, without preparation or support (Connor, 2012, p. 34).

Perhaps, if professionals and students were poorly prepared for sudden mainstreaming, what appears to be thoughtful and effective inclusive education is merely large-scale student dumping. Connor wonders if federal accountability reform hasn't brought about massive movement of students from segregated programs into general education classrooms without the necessary supports, modification, and instructional improvements required for high quality inclusion.

Examining National Data on the Education of Disabled Students

> The performance of special education students is often thought to be persistently low. Yet state assessment data…indicate that the performance of the special education subgroup is increasing over time (Davis, Lazarus & Thurlow, 2012, p. 3 - 4)

After ten years of NCLB implementation, large sets of federal data about both academic achievement and the classroom placements of students with disabilities are now available, allowing for more conclusive analyses on the impact of the accountability reforms. National data from school years 2000-1 through 2009-10 indicate that students with disabilities experienced improved educational outcomes. There is evidence of gradual progress over a decade in three specific areas: high school graduation, academic achievement, and inclusion in general education classrooms.

High School Graduation

More students with disabilities are graduating from high school and less are dropping out of school without a diploma (see Table 1). Among students with disabilities who exited or left school, the percentage who earned a high school diploma rose from 29.91 in 2000-1 to 37.89 in 2009-10. That represents an over 26% increase in students with disabilities graduating from high school over ten years. Simultaneously, the percentage who exited school without a high school diploma fell from 25.67 in 2000-1 to 12.77 in 2009-10, a decrease of drop-outs of over 50%.

Table 1: Students with disabilities in the United States, age 14-21, who exited school

	2000-1	2001-2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10
% exiting with high school diploma	29.91	32.09	31.96	33.06	32.1	33.03	32.77	34.41	35.67	37.89
% dropping out without diploma	25.67	23.6	20.45	18.85	16.68	15.33	14.94	14.33	13.17	12.77

Retrieved from https://www.ideadata.org/TABLES34TH/AR_4-3.pdf (IDEA DATA, Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education) on July 5, 2012

Reading and Math Achievement

It appears, from available federal data, that the academic achievement of students with disabilities has improved somewhat under No Child Left Behind. Disabled students, taken as a group, generally lag well far behind non-disabled students on state and national standardized measures. Their academic gains since the implementation of NCLB appear to be modest, inconsistent across states and different measures, and focused primarily in the lower grades of schooling.

A study of academic years 2000-1 through 2004-5 by the National Center on Educational Outcomes found moderate gains in math and reading achievement for students with disabilities in elementary and middle schools. Elementary level performance outpaced middle school, and high school data did not demonstrate any improvements in achievement (Thurlow, Quenemoen, Altman & Cuthbert, 2008).

An analysis issued by the Center on Education Policy in 2009 found that the only clear areas of academic gains nationally for students with disabilities were in reading and mathematics at the fourth grade level. The authors stated, "In reading….the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at the advanced level increased in 25 of the 41 states with sufficient data and decreased in 11 states. In math, 26 of 42 states showed gains at the advanced level while 11 showed a decline" (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2009, p. 2).

In California, students with disabilities have improved markedly on both state assessments and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). Between 2002–03 and 2007–08, state assessments for students with disabilities increased 122 percent in English-language arts and 77 percent in mathematics. Passage rates for students with disabilities on the CAHSEE graduation requirement rose from 47.8 percent for the class of 2006 to 48.8 percent for the class of 2007 and 53.8 percent of students with disabilities in the class of 2008 (Lipscomb, 2009).

Many researchers consider the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to be the most accurate measure of student achievement. Like the state-level examinations, it is required under NCLB. Unlike the

state-level tests, it is not a high stakes measurement. States do not gain or lose federal funds based on NAEP, thereby making it less political and less subject to strategic manipulations by state educational officials seeking favorable results.

Due to changes in the NAEP testing format in Reading and Math, the only available, comparative national data on achievement for students with disabilities come from the years 2004 and 2008. Achievement for students with disabilities improved in Reading and Math from 2004 to 2008 for all age levels (9, 13, 17). The improvements, for the most part, were slight and statistically non-significant. Only the reading scores for 13 year olds and 17 year olds improved at a level of statistical significance (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: NAEP Reading, Students with Disabilities, Scaled Scores Improvements 2004-2008*

Students' Age	**2004 Scaled Score**	**2008 Scaled Score**	**Statistical significance**
9	178	182	Not significant
13	216	224	P value=0.00283
17	236	243	P value=0.0199

*All comparisons are independent tests with an alpha level of 0.05 adjusted for multiple pairwise comparisons according to the False Discovery Rate procedure.

Table 3: NAEP Math, Students with Disabilities, Scaled Scores Improvements 2004-2008*

Students' Age	**2004 Scaled Score**	**2008 Scaled Score**	**Statistical significance**
9	209	214	Not significant
13	243	246	Not significant
17	276	277	Not significant

*All comparisons are independent tests with an alpha level of 0.05 adjusted for multiple pairwise comparisons according to the False Discovery Rate procedure.

Time Spent in General Education Classrooms

Data indicates that students with disabilities in the United States are spending less time in segregated special education classrooms and schools and more time in general education classrooms (see Table 4). The percentage of all students with disabilities who spend over 80% of their school time in general education classrooms increased from 48.44 in 2001 to 60.49 to 2010. This constitutes an almost 25% increase in the participation of disabled students in general education over one decade.

Table 4: Percentage of all students with disabilities, ages 6 – 21, who spent over 80% of time in general education classrooms, 2001-2010

Year	2001	2002	2004	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
%	48.44	48.22	49.88	52.14	53.63	53.70	57.21	58.49	59.42	60.49

It appears that the technocratic reform emphasis on providing all students access to the curriculum and instruction of the general education program has brought about a significant, gradual shift in the classroom placements of many students with disabilities.

Conclusion: Progress?

As Connor (2012) argued in his analysis of special education in New York City, statistical indicators of disabled students improving in a few specific areas of educational activity leaves many questions unanswered. Most researchers who study inclusive education define inclusion in much more complex and nuanced terms than the oversimplified classroom placement time data gathered by the United States Department of Education. The physical location of the student with a disability obviously matters. But what actually happens in the classroom shared by students with and without disabilities is held by most inclusive educators to be the crux of the matter.

By most accounts, inclusive education should, if done well, consist of or result in the following positive developments in integrated general education classrooms and schools:

- Non-disabled teachers and students view students with disabilities in a more positive light, thereby achieving a cultural shift from stigmatization to social valuing. Having a disability becomes understood as more of a legitimate way of being human (Cook, 2004; Giangreco, St. Denis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993).
- The quality of social interactions and interpersonal relationships between non-disabled and disabled students improves as part of a more supportive and nurturing learning community (Chadsey & Han, 2005; Staub, Spaulding, Peck, Gallucci, & Schwartz, 1996; Whitaker, Barratt, Joy, Potter, & Thomas, 1998).
- Educational equity and opportunity for all diverse students improves. Schools and classrooms become more accepting and supportive learning environments for students historically marginalized not only on the basis of disability but also race, ethnicity, heritage language, gender, and sexual orientation (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Thompson, 2011).

Inclusive education, cast in this broader, thicker manner, cannot be easily reduced to the question of where disabled students are located. Inclusive education is a larger mission for the public schools that seeks the development of democratic, supportive communities of culturally and biologically diverse friends and learners.

But the political power of the technocratic policy narrative derives, at least in part, from its ability to ignore concepts and priorities that invite complexity and ambiguity. It runs strong and direct by maintaining a reductionistic focus, by holding fast to an unapologetic and undiversified narrowness. It simplifies complex social ecologies and patterns of human interaction into a series of clear data points that are easily calculated and tracked by administrators on computer screens. The complexities and vagaries of human social activity in schools are distilled into trend line and bar graph clarity.

This strength of technocracy as an approach to top-down administrative control is a weakness in regard to the task of providing a compelling and useful narrative for inclusive education. This is due to the fact that inclusive education quite intentionally pursues a path of deeply nuance social meanings, experiential richness, and embraced ambiguity. It honors not straight lines, neat corners, balanced algorithms, and efficient social groupings but messy

joys, unanticipated friendships, open hearts, and countercultural experimentation. It holds that life is not meant to be calculated and tabulated but lived with openness, creativity, and vigor.

Inclusion begins with an understanding that disability itself is not a simple social phenomenon that can be captured in efficient codifications on Excel sheets. The multitude of ways that human beings differ from one another as well as how those differences gain social meaning in varied performative and cultural contexts sends social scientists and humanities scholars scrambling endlessly for more and better forms of measurement and representation. The ongoing challenge of interpreting, representing, and understanding human differences continues, moving with the forward pace of history, refusing to hold a still pose. Arguably, making cultural sense of how human beings differ from one another in terms of physicality and behavior is a central task of living itself. Coming to terms with who we are as individuals and how we might come together as loving communities is essential to the human endeavor. These are opportunities for our growth and exploration in a life that promises no certainties of bodily furnishing or functioning.

While inclusive educators may scoff at the narrow engineering mentality and the Tayloresque efficiency of the architects of educational accountability reform, the question of the overall consequences of IDEA and NCLB in the schooling experiences of students with disabilities remains primarily unanswered. The apparent steps of positive progress detected in the too-narrow empirical data of the administrators, though grossly insufficient, is nonetheless compelling. Top down administrative systems of technocratic management seem to be steering schools and teachers to bring more students with disabilities into general classrooms where they seem to be achieving greater academic success. After many years of moral persuasion from inclusionists who have tried to convince general and special educators that integrated classrooms are the most ethical way to educate all students, it may be that technocratic modes of social engineering are more effective means to inclusive ends. Perhaps. Undoubtedly, inclusive educators who hold a complex understanding of human variation and the rich life of school communities will continue to wonder and worry about what is lost, ignore, and left out of the technocratic narrative of public education.

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