

2011

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### Recommended Citation

LaBarbera, R. (2011). Transforming Teaching in Inclusive Settings: An Educator Looks at VIM. *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/>-

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### Abstract

Inclusive classrooms are those in which students with special needs are educated alongside their non-disabled peers. This article examines the attitudes that teachers in inclusive settings may hold that are believed to be barriers to successful inclusion. Given that historically, students with special needs in inclusive classrooms have made limited academic progress through traditional whole-class instruction, it is suggested that a transformation in inclusive teaching take place. This article suggests that educators apply Dallas Willard's (2002) concept of VIM, outlined in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. Christian teachers may find the vision, intention, and means Willard advocates to be useful in bringing about the desired transformation.

## **Transforming Teaching in Inclusive Settings: An Educator Looks at VIM**

Robin LaBarbera, Ph.D.

### **Abstract**

Inclusive classrooms are those in which students with special needs are educated alongside their non-disabled peers. This article examines the attitudes that teachers in inclusive settings may hold that are believed to be barriers to successful inclusion. Given that historically, students with special needs in inclusive classrooms have made limited academic progress through traditional whole-class instruction, it is suggested that a transformation in inclusive teaching take place. This article suggests that educators apply Dallas Willard's (2002) concept of VIM, outlined in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. Christian teachers may find the *vision, intention, and means* Willard advocates to be useful in bringing about the desired transformation.

### **Introduction**

There is an increasing need for teachers who can provide effective instruction to students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Berry, 2010). Since the initiation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB United States Department of Education, 2001), students with disabilities must be granted access to the regular education curriculum. As an increasing number of school districts establish inclusive practices, it becomes evident that to ensure the success of students with disabilities, teachers must have the requisite training, knowledge, and attitude. There is evidence to suggest, however, that teachers in inclusive settings may believe they are not completely prepared with strategies for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Cooper, Kurttis, Baber, & Vallecorsa, 2008). Without the necessary preparation, the success of students with disabilities in those classrooms is a concern.

Studies investigating the attitudes of inclusive teachers point to the necessity of a positive attitude toward the practice of inclusion and toward students with disabilities (Ross-Hill, 2009). Traditionally, regular education teachers have been apprehensive towards inclusive practices, either because of their

inability to accommodate students with special needs in their classrooms, because they feel they lack the necessary time to supplement the curriculum, or because they simply do not favor inclusive practices in general (Ross-Hill, 2009). The significance of attitude should not be underestimated.

To that end, favorable attitudes toward inclusion, despite the challenges associated with the practice, are necessary. Attitudes are important insofar as they predict behavior. Berry (2010) advised that:

A teacher who believes that inclusion is unfair to typically achieving students may act in subtle (or not so subtle) ways that negatively affect students with disabilities in that classroom. It may be that the presence or absence of positive attitudes and a sense of commitment to principles of inclusion can tip teachers toward making or avoiding efforts to effectively teach students with disabilities. (p. 76)

Teachers who have favorable attitudes toward inclusion generally believe that students with disabilities belong in general education classrooms, that they can learn there, and that the teachers have confidence in their abilities to teach students with disabilities (Berry, 2010).

What, then, is expected of a Christian teacher in an inclusive setting, where the expectation is to educate students with disabilities along with their non-disabled peers? Those who identify themselves as followers of Christ are called to invite students to be valued members of the classroom community (Pudlas, 2007). Pudlas pointed out, "Simply stated: attitude matters. If teachers betray a negative attitude (are disinviting) toward students with diverse learning needs, it is highly unlikely that those students will perceive themselves as valued members of the community" (p. 7). Anderson (2003) also wrote about the imperative to create a truly inclusive community:

Accepting people as they are, with their disabilities but also with their gifts and their beauty; seeing

them as human persons with great value; recognizing their potential for growth rather than seeing them as a conglomeration of limitations; joining with them in relationships of mutual teaching and learning; all can lead to true community. (p. 33)

The purpose of this paper is to address the question of how Christian teachers in inclusive settings can improve the learning community for their students with disabilities.

The paper will examine potential reasons for the difficulties in providing a truly inclusive education, and will suggest that Christian teachers in inclusive classrooms consider applying Dallas Willard's (2002) concept of VIM (Vision, Intention, and Means) to improve academic outcomes with their included students. Two factors might explain why teachers feel reluctant to adapt curriculum or instruction to best serve the needs of their students with disabilities. One such roadblock to successful inclusion for students with disabilities might be insufficient teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities, and the second is the negative perception that teachers in inclusive settings may hold toward their students with disabilities. Following the discussion of the factors contributing to less-than-successful inclusion, this article then suggests that Christian teachers in inclusive settings, who wish to improve academic outcomes for their students, can apply the VIM pattern suggested by Dallas Willard in his work, *Renovation of the Heart*. Willard's three-part pattern of transformation can be seen as appropriate in transforming inclusive teaching in classrooms where students with forms of learning or cognitive disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers. The recommendation is that educators seek to remove the barriers to successful inclusion, and bring about a transformation in inclusive teaching through the appropriate *vision, intention, and means* advocated by Willard.

### **The Call of Christian Educators**

Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the greatest extent possible is mandated by law. Christian educators have an even greater responsibility to understand and appreciate the students entrusted to their care. As Anderson (2003) pointed out so eloquently:

Including the excluded—reaching out to those ignored or pushed away by society—was characteristic of Jesus' ministry, and out to be the hallmark of Christian educators and churches. Christian churches and Christian teacher training programs must seek to encourage and model an inclusive world view in which individuals with disabilities are recognized as having equal value as bearers of God's image. (p. 27)

The call to Christian educators is to make a difference in the lives of the young people with whom they come into contact, to treat them with respect, to show them love, and to build in them a sense of confidence.

In the classroom, it is important to be aware of the different abilities of students—those who excel academically, as well as those who struggle. There is no place in the Bible where we are told that God created only students who excel in every category. Accepting the responsibility to educate all children, regardless of ability level, is based on the belief that all are created in God's image. Christian educators have a responsibility to invest the necessary time with students who need additional help. It seems that many times, however, that children with learning differences aren't recognized for their gifts. Instead, they hear repeated messages that they are disordered, broken, or failures.

Burden (2009), in a comprehensive review of 20 years worth of research literature about individuals with learning differences, concluded, "In a society such as ours, where literacy is a highly valued skill or commodity, a perceived inability to acquire that skill is highly likely to have a negative effect upon any individual's conception of themselves as competent" (p. 189). Children who struggle in school without the appropriate support learn very early on that they are different from other children, and they are reminded of this all of their lives. They, in turn, likely have few opportunities to feel good about themselves, or to feel affirmed as unique and beloved children of God, appreciated for the gifts and talents they bring to the classroom. The classroom of a Christian teacher can and should be the perfect environment for affirming the gifts of all children.

In Matthew 25:40 one is reminded, "To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (New

American Standard Bible). Christians are to show God's mercy to others, including those students who are different or seemingly difficult to teach. So showing love and compassion to such individuals honors God because they are creatures of worth who bear God's image. Christians are called to minister to the least of His, and are thus duty bound to bring light where darkness and helplessness might prevail. That includes inclusive classroom settings, where students who have faced repeated failures in their school lives need teachers who live out their faith and are capable of finding ways to help students progress and reach their potential.

The way educators view inclusion and the students who are included in their classrooms determines the classroom environment. Willard (2002) indicated, "Our thoughts are one of the most basic sources of our life. They determine the orientation of everything we do and evoke the feelings that frame our world and motivate our actions" (p. 96). From our thoughts and perceptions flow decisions that determine what we will do and who we will become (Willard). Transformation involves recognizing the idea systems that are counterproductive to successful inclusion—that one does not possess the requisite knowledge, or that the investment in students who struggle will not pay off—and replacing them with a transformed perspective.

### **What is VIM?**

Dallas Willard (2002) had a lot to say about transformation. He argued in *Renovation of the Heart* that you must have the *vision*, the *intention*, and the *means* (VIM) if you want to make any kind of change in your life, including how one facilitates inclusion of students with disabilities into the classroom community. The degree of success in efforts of transformation will depend upon the degree to which this general pattern is conformed. For any kind of transformation to occur, spiritual or otherwise, Willard argued that believers must implement the appropriate vision, intention, and means.

Willard (2002) explained his concept of VIM through the illustration of someone learning to speak a language they do not presently know. To make this kind of transformation, one must have a *vision*—some idea of what it would be like to speak the language. One must be able to see what his or her life would be like having made such a transformation, and why it would be such a

desirable thing to do. A person must have some idea of what must be done to learn the language, and why the time and energy expense would be worth the effort. Unless one has the vision of learning the language, then it will not be accomplished. Moreover, "If the vision is clear and strong, it will very likely pull everything else required along with it; and the language...will be learned, even in difficult and distracting circumstances" (Willard, 2002, p. 83).

Next, there must be *intention* to fulfill the vision. Transformation will not happen by accident, Willard (2002) asserted. One must initiate, or bring into being, the factors that would bring the vision to reality. Finally, one must carry through with the pattern with *means*. To learn a language, one would have to sign up for a language course, or listen to recordings, or purchase books, or associate with people who speak that language, or any method of practicing the language. A strong vision, intention to bring the vision into being, and employment of the means will ensure the outcome.

It is quite possible that current classroom practices can be transformed by applying the VIM framework. Given the research suggesting a gap between appropriate interventions and the use of those strategies known to facilitate the effective inclusion of students with disabilities (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003; Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2008; Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey, & Simon, 2005) it becomes increasingly important that inclusive teaching be transformed. Effective inclusion teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusion and their students with disabilities, and are determined to eliminate the roadblocks to full inclusion. Anderson (2003) wrote,

For the classroom to be a truly inclusive community, any negative attitude needs to be removed," and added that, "For this to occur, a biblical attitude toward disabilities and those with disabilities is needed, one which involves a re-envisioning of people with handicapping conditions. (p. 30)

The suggestion is that educators in inclusive settings purposefully develop a clear vision of transformed teaching practices, fully intend to bring about the change, and take advantage of the means to facilitate a change in the educational practices of

their classroom. If educators are to transform inclusive teaching, the suggestion is that they employ the appropriate vision, intention, and means.

### **Current Practices in Inclusive Settings**

Extant research indicates that students with exceptionalities have higher academic achievement when given opportunities to engage in collaborative peer interactions. It is not the purpose of this article to provide an in-depth review of the available instructional strategies for children with special needs. Worth mentioning here, however, are the cooperative peer-mediated activities that would be relatively simple to implement and would be beneficial for a wide variety of student needs.

Cooperative learning and peer-based interactions have been advocated by a number of researchers in the education of students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Grey, Bruton, and Honan (2007) believed that cooperative learning is advantageous for increasing levels of active task engagement and social engagement between students with intellectual disabilities and typically developing peers in the classroom. The extensively-research peer-tutoring strategies investigated and advocated by Maheady, Mallette, and Harper (2006) also show special promise as an academic intervention to developing the literacy skills of students who struggle academically. Earlier research by Kamps and Barbetta (1994) involving students who have autism also found peer tutoring to be an effective strategy for increasing reading fluency and comprehension for both students with autism and their peers. And Marr, Algozzine, Kavel, and Dugan (2010) introduced an intervention with second grade students who were failing to make academic progress in their general education classroom. A recent investigation found peer mediated learning groups, in which children work together to support each other, to be a powerful academic intervention (Marr et al., 2010).

However, the strategies shown to be beneficial for students in inclusive settings may be underutilized. The gap between research evidence and classroom practices persists in both general and special education (Cook et al., 2008). And it seems that teachers with more negative attitudes toward inclusion report less frequent use of the instructional strategies believed to facilitate the effective inclusion of children with disabilities

(Campbell et al., 2003). Shippen et al. (2005) examined the perceptions 326 future educators about their attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms. The researchers found considerable resistance and high levels of anxiety among the participants toward the idea of inclusion (Shippen et al.).

LaBarbera and Soto-Hinman (2009) conducted a student-shadowing project, where teacher candidates had the opportunity to observe firsthand the kinds of instructional opportunities that were given to students with disabilities. Christian teacher candidates spent three hours each shadowing a student with special needs in inclusive settings taught primarily by Christian master teachers. Results demonstrated that almost 90% of classroom instruction involved the teacher as primary speaker to the whole class, leaving little time to be spent on highly beneficial small-group peer interactions that can assist children with disabilities in their academic endeavors (LaBarbera & Soto-Hinman). Even though there are numerous investigations expressing benefits of small, collaborative learning groups, the reality is that too often the child with special needs is not provided with beneficial learning activities and opportunities.

Teachers in inclusive settings have mixed beliefs about inclusion, which affects their willingness to utilize research-based practices. Some believe they have the ability to teach students with disabilities in regular classrooms and that inclusive settings provide positive effects on the learning outcomes of students with disabilities, yet others have concerns about feeling unprepared to provide the necessary instruction in inclusive classrooms (Cooper et al., 2008). Regardless of the reasons, it appears that, in a significant number of inclusive settings, students with disabilities are given infrequent opportunities to engage in meaningful instructional activities.

### **Barriers to Successful Inclusion**

Since inclusion refers to the practice of educating students of various levels of disabilities in the general education classroom together with their non-disabled peers, the goal of inclusion is to provide a learning environment that enriches all members of the classroom as children with disabilities participate in class and extracurricular activities, learning alongside students who do not have disabilities. As greater numbers of students with disabilities are included in general education

classrooms, teachers are increasingly called upon to meet the unique needs of a wide variety of students (Berry, 2010).

There is a general consensus in the literature that a positive attitude toward inclusion is central to its overall effectiveness. Cook and Tankersley (2000), in their investigation of teacher attitudes toward their included students, suggested that such attitudes “represent a more potent and parsimonious predictor of quality of education for included students with disabilities” (p. 116). Silverman (2007) placed high importance on the need for teachers to develop positive attitudes toward inclusion. Campbell et al. (2003) also supported those assertions based on their research of 274 teacher education students. And most recently, Berry (2010) maintained that effective inclusion teachers maintain positive attitudes toward inclusion, including a willingness to take responsibility for the learning of their students.

Not everyone is excited about bringing students with disabilities into the mainstream classroom setting. Studies have shown that oftentimes, educators in inclusive settings feel they lack sufficient preparation or training to instruct students with disabilities, and as a result they doubt their abilities to support students in inclusive settings (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009). Kosko and Wilkins suggested that college coursework is often seen as ineffective and that teachers have received too few hours of professional development to prepare them to instruct students with disabilities. A teacher in the inclusive classroom cannot be expected to be successful with students who have disabilities without a solid foundation of knowledge about students’ disabilities and their educational needs. It can be quite overwhelming to implement diverse instructional strategies when one has limited knowledge about potential modifications and accommodations to facilitate the academic success of students with disabilities.

Attitudes toward inclusion have important correlates with classroom practice. Several researchers point out that teachers who feel unprepared to teach in inclusive settings are less likely to exhibit the teaching behaviors that positively impact their students (Berry, 2010). However, with adequate resources, training, and other supports necessary to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms, teachers might be

more willing to adapt the curriculum for their students, and to be more patient and flexible in providing their students with the extra help required (Silverman, 2007). Successful inclusive classrooms are taught by instructors who have been equipped with the training necessary to facilitate the academic success of their students of all levels.

Another apparent obstacle to successful inclusion is a teacher’s attitude toward the students who have special needs. A number of teachers show reluctance towards the policy of inclusion, due in part to their belief system toward the included students themselves (Campbell et al., 2003). Students with developmental disabilities are sometimes viewed as too impaired to participate in meaningful literacy learning experiences with their typical peers (Humphrey, 2008; Miranda, 2003). Those with less favorable attitudes toward inclusion tend to believe that inclusion makes too many demands on the teacher or that students with disabilities are better served in special education placements where they can receive individual attention (Berry, 2010). Campbell et al. (2003) asserted that educators with this belief set tend to make less frequent use of instructional strategies that are known to facilitate the effective inclusion of students with disabilities, perhaps because they feel they should not be responsible for the necessary remediation efforts (Berry), that their students with disabilities would not respond favorably to those efforts, or that the presence of students with disabilities would negatively impact the learning of other students (Cook & Tankersley, 2000). Students with disabilities whose teachers view them positively are far more likely to thrive in the inclusive classroom (Silverman, 2007).

Educators may have serious reservations about inclusive educational practice, perhaps because their limited knowledge of behaviors and characteristics of students with exceptionalities induces some form of anxiety (Shippen et al., 2005) or they simply feel general discomfort, uncertainty, or vulnerability when interacting with students who have disabilities (Campbell et al., 2003). Regardless of the source of such perceptions, unduly pessimistic attitudes regarding academic potential are likely to affect the value these teachers place on inclusion. As a result, such a classroom may not provide critical opportunities for students with special needs to make academic progress. Historically, inclusive

classrooms have not revealed improved outcomes for included students when their teachers remain skeptical (Campbell et al.; Cook & Tankersley, 2000; Shippen et al., 2005). The need for teachers to develop positive views toward inclusion becomes particularly urgent in light of these findings.

### **Vision in the Inclusive Classroom**

Given that students with disabilities may not be receiving the needed evidence-based practices known to facilitate their effective inclusion into the classroom community, a general transformation in teaching practices is imperative. It is believed that the traditional classroom, where students with exceptionalities are infrequently provided meaningful instructional activities, is the result of an impaired vision of how a truly inclusive classroom could function. The absence of a vision for effectively educating students with exceptionalities might explain why inclusive classrooms have been generally less than successful in meeting the needs of students who struggle academically. Alternately, a more optimistic view toward inclusion and included students with disabilities is suggested. School personnel must work diligently to develop a clear vision of what an inclusive classroom looks like and how it could function.

The presence of a new vision, where interacting with students with disabilities becomes more comfortable, shows promise for ways in which inclusive teaching can be transformed. The dispositions necessary to help all students learn, including those with disabilities, include increased awareness about the characteristics of students with disabilities and knowledge of the best practices for educating them (Campbell et al., 2003; Cook et al., 2008; Shippen et al., 2005). The challenge is to promote and sustain more accepting attitudes toward the benefits of including students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom. In the words of Dallas Willard (2005), “They need to be gripped by the desirability of it. That would be their vision.”

Where educators sense the shortcomings of their teacher preparation program or of the professional development they have received, they should be compelled to fill those perceived gaps. With a new vision of how their teaching could be radically improved, educators can begin their own investigation into strategies shown to be beneficial

for students with exceptionalities. It is important that they devote significant attention to gaining the knowledge to expand their capacity to serve students with a variety of disabilities in a mainstream setting so they are able to more effectively match such interventions with students’ characteristics and learning styles and ultimately facilitate positive outcomes. Resources must be allocated toward this end. By attending to these issues, a more inclusive classroom is possible. It begins with a clear vision.

It is of primary importance for classroom teachers to have an idea of what transformed teaching would be like, and why it would be a desirable thing. Removing the barriers to successful inclusion, such as dissatisfaction with prior training or negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, requires a clear vision of a different kind of classroom. Willard (2002) insisted that the greatest need lies in forming the vision, for without it, nothing moves: “Unless it is properly grasped, the intention will be malformed or nonexistent and the means implemented will be chaotic and ineffectual” (p. 112).

### **Intention in the Inclusive Classroom**

Intention is the second element in transformation, according to Willard (2002). He stressed that projects of transformation do not succeed by accident. Willard (2005) conveyed:

Imagine, if you can, a person wondering day after day if he or she is going to learn Arabic, or if he or she is going to get married to a certain person—just waiting, to see whether it would “happen.” That would be laughable. But many people actually seem to live in this way with respect to major issues involving them, including spiritual growth. That fact goes far to explain why lives often go as badly as they do. To learn a language, as for the many even more important concerns of life, we must resolutely intend the vision, if it is to be realized. That is, we must initiate, decide, bring into being, those factors that would turn the vision into reality.

When transformed inclusive teaching is envisioned, a conscious involvement to see it through will be effective in bringing about the desired change.

Willard’s (2005) second element of VIM, *intention*, must be a part of the transformation, and should be accompanied by a decision to fulfill the intention. Unless we actually decide to do what we intend to



do, the transformation we envisioned will never come into being (Willard). If one has envisioned how teaching could be different—how the academic achievement of the students who struggle could be improved—by utilizing research-based strategies, but one has formed the opinion that their teacher-training program insufficiently prepared them to educate students with special needs, one must decide to fill the gaps. Following a clear vision for a transformed classroom, one must then intend to gain more knowledge. One must come to a decision to make it happen. It is necessary to conduct personal research, learn the beneficial strategies for students who struggle with academics and start using them in the classroom.

If one does not intend to have transformed teaching, then it will not happen magically. Drawing upon Willard's (2002) wisdom, one can be assured that the issue with classroom transformation is not that it is impossible or that effectual means to it are not available. The problem is that transformation is not intended. Educators who do not see the value of efforts toward educating students with special needs will not likely decide to carry through with it. This in turn is largely due to the fact that educators do not have the vision of how their teaching can be transformed. It becomes clear that each of the three elements of VIM work together to bring about a desired result.

### **Means in the inclusive classroom**

The final element in the general pattern of personal transformation, according to Willard (2002) is the *means*. This element involves the instrumentalities by which inclusive teaching can be transformed—the means by which one can become the kind of teacher who is equipped to instruct students with exceptionalities in inclusive settings. With the vision, and the intention for carrying it out, one can find and implement the means, states Willard. In other words, “If the vision is clear and strong, and the employment of the means thoughtful and persistent, then the outcome will be ensured” (Willard, 2002, p. 84).

By what means can educators be transformed into those who are capable of addressing the needs of unique learners in our classroom? The inclusive classroom requires an efficient and effective teacher who can guide every student toward academic success. Further training is therefore necessary in many cases, so that educators can reach the diverse

mix of students they face every day. It is essential to learn proven strategies that will likely turn academic struggles and repeated failures into opportunities for success for students. One way to gain knowledge about a variety of instructional strategies is by attending workshops or conferences for educators. There are numerous conferences that teach strategies that have been shown to be successful for students with special needs. Another means could be to conduct internet searches for beneficial inclusion strategies. There are a number of websites that define various disabilities and explain their characteristics, and many provide information about research-based strategies designed to meet the various needs of students. Other resources include textbooks about educating students in inclusive classrooms (many are available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)). Such textbooks provide a plethora of possible accommodations and modifications.

There are numerous means that could be effective toward transforming educators into those who have increased capacity to provide beneficial educational services in inclusive classrooms. Research demonstrates that “teachers need and want information about specific disability characteristics and related instructional and behavior management techniques. Having this information promotes positive attitudes toward inclusion” (Berry, 2010, p. 77). Since teachers who hold more favorable attitudes toward inclusion use more effective teaching strategies, and are willing to make instructional accommodations for students with disabilities, they should then be provided with professional development opportunities and other resources in the form of information and tools. It is also important that teachers accept inclusion as necessary and beneficial. As teachers grow to see themselves as capable inclusion teachers, and develop more positive views regarding inclusion and their included students, more effective inclusion teaching will result. In the absence of beneficial teacher training, educators are encouraged to personally seek out the knowledge that will help them find new ways of meeting students' needs.

Willard (2002) suggested that once you have the vision and the intention in place, you will find effectual means to fulfill the decision to realize the vision. As you choose to give your time and energy to transforming inclusive teaching, it will happen.

Willard asserted that you must choose to do it and learn how, just like learning to program the recording of your favorite TV show, or just like learning strategies to have a fully inclusive classroom.

## Conclusions

Literacy interventions that target the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive settings have been reported in the literature, including those reporting results of cooperative learning and peer-tutoring strategies (Grey et al., 2007; Kamps & Barbeta, 1994; Maheady et al., 2006; Marr et al., 2010). That literature, when combined with the findings that the majority of classroom time is spent on whole-class instruction that is of limited benefit for students with disabilities (LaBarbera & Soto-Hinman, 2009), points to the urgency with which teachers must be equipped and supported to open new avenues for learning in the inclusive classroom.

There is a general concern about the capacity and the attitudes of teachers to provide necessary educational services in inclusive settings to their students with special needs. These concerns are primarily focused on two issues: (1) classroom teachers' expertise to construct and deliver appropriate educational services to those with disabilities efficiently and effectively; and (2) classroom teachers' attitudes toward working with students with disabilities. A teacher's lack of experience or training, or persistent negative attitudes toward students with disabilities can undermine the efforts of inclusion. It is important for teachers in inclusive settings to become aware of the barriers to successful inclusion, and they are encouraged to think about how they can effectively include students with disabilities.

The goal should be to bring about transformation in attitudes toward inclusion and included students. Educators are encouraged to value children as Jesus does, love them as Jesus does, and to bring out the gifts of students who are created in His image. The call is to find the inherent gifts in all students and to facilitate their development. Educators can transform their view of themselves as teachers in inclusive settings who can bring change to the lives of the students entrusted to their care, remembering that in doing so they are not neglecting the students who excel—they are not giving attention to students who struggle to the detriment of the students who do not have disabilities. By loving all of students as

Jesus loves them, educators are empowering each and every one of them to achieve their full potential.

In the words of Willard (2002),

If we are to be spiritually transformed in Christ, we must have and must implement the appropriate *vision, intention, and means*. Not just any path we take will do. If this VIM pattern is not put in place and held there, Christ simply will not be formed in us. (p. 85)

The same holds true for transforming inclusive teaching: we must implement the VIM. If inclusive education is to produce favorable results, then there is a requirement for teachers to gain more knowledge and understanding of how inclusive teaching can be transformed. This article promotes Willard's concept of VIM as a model whereby educators can realize their vision of improved inclusive teaching for all students, including those who have special needs.

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