A VOLUME IN
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

# WITHIN REACH

## Providing Universal Access to the Four Pillars of Literacy

Hoaihuong "Orletta" Nguyen
& Jeanne Sesky

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# Within Reach

## Providing Universal Access to the Four Pillars of Literacy

by

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# FOREWORD

**Anthony H. Normore**

National figures suggest that millions of students are at risk of dropping out of school. Data further reveal that many of these students come from groups who are underserved and underrepresented: students of color, high-mobility students (including foster, migrant, and homeless), English language learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students (Esposito & Normore, 2015). Although progress has been made in advancing equity agendas of access, participation, and academic achievement for individuals from culturally diverse and economically poor backgrounds, significant work remains. This is particularly true in urban settings, which overwhelmingly serve students who are economically poor, culturally and linguistically diverse, and who lag significantly behind their peers in academic achievement. Truly a moral and ethical imperative, rooted within a social justice framework exists to ameliorate such failures. The achievement of all students must be viewed both as an economic and moral imperative.

The majority of the extant educational literature uses the term *inclusion* to reference the practice of educating students with *identified* disabilities in the general education setting. However, inclusion as we know it today is rooted in a philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness of all learners. An emphasis on high quality classrooms and schools that are welcoming and affirming to all students, especially those most at risk for failure, is both a

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moral and ethical obligation for society and school systems alike. In reviewing student outcome, social justice, and equity literature, it is clear that too often in our educational history, students who struggle have been marginalized and academic failure has become the norm. These students are generally an underserved diverse population that have additional factors that impact their learning. Academic success is placed beyond these diverse learners' reach as educators struggle with how to reach diverse learners in effective, consistent, and systematic ways.

In the book *Within Reach: Providing Universal Access to the Four Pillars of Literacy* Orletta Nguyen and Jeanne Sesky break from the compliance of tranquil minds, courageously examining issues that deal with a plethora of challenges to our educational system and its relation to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the United States. These authors push us to tackle issues found in schools and offer a lens by which to see how teacher leaders fit into the strategic planning of school improvement plans. They offer practical considerations and strategies when implementing the Common Core and applying the standards to the diverse learner. Drawing on research from teacher leadership, Universal Design for Learning, special education, and English language learners, Nguyen and Sesky provide a framework for how to utilize teachers and teacher leaders in their efforts to equitably and proactively plan for instruction for diverse learners while simultaneously making CCSS accessible to all learners (specifically the anchor standards in reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and how these standards can be uncovered and made attainable to diverse student populations. Of particular interest to the reader is how Nguyen and Sesky, though perhaps unintentionally, highlight how schools are used to instill values, morality, testing, sorting, labeling, and punishing. They bring us to an understanding of how the educational system currently exists within the social system by identifying the power and moral dimension of institutions and how institutions designate good or bad through the social lessons they teach, through where they are built, and how they label. They challenge us to consider the changes we need to make: a personal examination of how we teach, learn, how we teach teachers, focus on our students strengths, teacher strengths, and ask ourselves difficult questions about why we teach.

The structural crisis of the capitalist system as a whole only exacerbates the challenges articulated and analyzed so meticulously by these authors, who are uniquely adept and positioned in exposing the exploitative privileges at work in institutions. Education's social and metabolic control over the lives of our children reflects the policies and practices of the capitalist elite who target the most vulnerable populations in the poorest neighborhoods and communities, and thereby create educational crises. In response, we need a sustainable ecology of educational practices that sustains solutions

to the crisis of public education today, policies and practices that refuse to squander the lives of our most marginalized youth who often end up incarcerated. In the pages ahead, *Within Reach: Providing Universal Access to the Four Pillars of Literacy* is a timely book whose authors evidently are exceptionally gifted for their success in refusing to let the voices of dissent remain marginalized in the discussion of education in the 21st century. Orletta Nguyen and Jeanne Sesky have done this by tackling issues that range from the foundational concepts of equity and marginalization of students of diversity, and the Universal Design lens to increasing equity, to the sustainability and systemic change of fostering teacher leadership. These authors have provided the reader with preparation and reflection questions, as well as resources to address the readers' own unique learning styles. Their work compels us to examine not only how educational policies are produced for the least advantaged in our schools, but how educators and students are themselves produced in the wider institutional, cultural, and economic arrangements of American society. The book is crafted from the professional experiences, intellectual engagements, and moral commitments of the authors. It is based on a foundation of equal and social justice concerning a multitude of lenses used to view and attempt to understand the need for those with a vested interest in CCSS, teacher leadership, and programs and support structures that promote and foster collaboration of those who lead and work in education.

By recognizing that the role of leaders in any organization is, at least in part, to advocate on behalf of traditionally marginalized and poorly served citizens. It carries a corollary contention that traditional hierarchies and power structures must be deconstructed and reconfigured, thereby creating a new paradigm that subverts a longstanding system that has privileged certain citizens while oppressing or neglecting others. This would mean that organization leaders must increase their awareness of various explicit and implicit forms of oppression. They need to develop an intent to subvert the dominant paradigm, and finally act as a committed advocate for educational change that makes a meaningful and positive change in the education and lives of traditionally marginalized and oppressed students, and extends their scope of influence well beyond the walls of their institutions. Given this perspective, educators are potentially the architects and builders of a new social order wherein traditionally disadvantaged students have the same educational opportunities, and by extension social opportunities, as traditionally advantaged students. Although some might argue that the Common Core is replete with gaps, it can be reasonably argued that the Common Core opens the door of opportunity for diverse learners to attain academic and language skills necessary to be successful in college and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

# THE FAILURE OF EDUCATION

## Keeping Students of Diversity at Arm's Length

Effective instructional practices have been focal points and under great debate in the political, social, and professional arenas for more than two decades. With the onset and implementation of No Child Left Behind in 2001, these points have been under fire and under siege leaving instructional leaders and educators frustrated, resentful, and in pursuit of the most efficient and effective solutions to solving the education crisis. With the inception of the Common Core State Standards (NGO & CSSO, 2010), the crisis has elevated itself to a virtual calamity as educators are feeling increased pressures to provide outcomes that capture the true complexity of student learning, while maintaining their integrity and commitment to the profession.

Although some might argue that the Common Core is rife with holes, we believe that the Common Core opens the door of opportunity for children to attain academic and language skills, particularly skills based on literacy. Critics of the Core insert doubt surrounding their development, intent, content, and implementation. While any standards movement demands healthy reaction and inspection, the authors contend that the design, breadth, and coherence of the Core outweigh concerns over align-

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ment, readiness, political derailment, encroachment by the Feds, and local control. The Core ushers in new life where NCLB was dying a slow death.

What has been "left behind" in the Core is the understanding and real life application of best practices for those students who are struggling learners. In reviewing student outcome, social justice, and equity literature it is clear that too often in our educational history, students who struggle have been marginalized and academic failure has become the norm. These students are a generally underserved population who may have additional factors that impact their learning. These factors include but are not limited to English language proficiency, disabilities, cultural diversity, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Academic success is placed beyond these diverse learners' reach, as educators struggle with how to reach diverse learners in effective, consistent, and systematic ways.

Historically, these students have been underperforming for decades, and possibly they are factors for policy changes to address achievement gaps. Yet, although these struggling learners are highlighted repeatedly as a critical population of students who educators must support, continued research indicates that we are failing them. Our diverse children should not be left behind; we must embrace diverse children. They deserve equitable access to curriculum, and quality education should be within their reach.

## THE CCSS: A HOPEFUL VISION FOR EQUITY

The concept of CCSS came decades before its actual inception and implementation. Yet as early as the 1990s, the educational field was already predicting benefits and challenges with the adoption of a common curriculum. The hopes of the CCSS were to provide an engaging, rigorous curriculum to all students regardless of race, class, and the state in which they lived; to prepare them for college, career, and global competitiveness. Additionally, implementation of CCSS hoped to garner a more focused curriculum where educators could take the time to dive deeper into concepts and thus engage students at higher levels of thinking and application (Kendall, 2011). In other words, the CCSS aimed to provide avenues for more intentional instruction, a manageable number of standards, increased opportunities for collaboration and collegiality, and above all a consistent and equitable learning experience for all (Kendall, 2011). Kendall articulates the fundamental belief behind the Common Core well when he states, "The nature of the core is of an essential, irreducible set of knowledge and skills, while common suggests a social contract all that it implies: shared benefit and equitable treatment" (p. 27).

Among these predictions also arose concerns regarding the constraints of a common curriculum upon students with diverse background, particularly

those who did not have equitable access to the curriculum in general. Politicians were concerned with equity (Mcdonnell & Weatherford, 2013), the NGO (non-government oganization) and CSSO reports indicated a disparity in learning the existing curriculum for students with diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (National Governors Association, 2010), and educational research indicated worries about the ability of students of diversity to access rigorous curriculum if they had never received exposure to it (McPartland & Schneider, 1996). More specifically, foreboding discussions revolved around issues that a common, national curriculum would not address the needs of diverse learners, assessments would not truly capture the proficiency and growth of students who were historically underachieving, and alienation of teachers to students who were underperforming due to the ramifications and pressures of high stakes testing pressures (McPartland & Schneider, 1996). Other concerns arose regarding the goals of CCSS: Are all students ready and suited for college? (Kendall, 2011).

With CCSS actively on the tongues of every educator in the nation, the aforementioned ominous predictions are becoming a reality. From personal experiences as well as emerging commentaries on CCSS, a large number of educators and parents are viewing CCSS as a challenge to education rather than an opportunity for beneficial change. For example, from the various schools that we have visited, CCSS poses a challenge to teachers in not only determining how to get students to perform at higher levels, but even more so CCSS is challenging for our students who arrive multiple grade levels below the "old standards." Concerns arise regarding how do we get kids to think critically when they don't understand the language or have a learning disability? There is only so much scaffolding in one day that a teacher can do!

On a larger scope, there are numerous editorials surfacing that criticize the rigor of the CCSS, claiming developmental inappropriateness and unrealistic goals for the standards. Even research is emerging to test the alignment of CCSS to its intentions. In Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang's (2011) comparison of CCSS to the previous state standards, they investigated alignment, content differences, assessments, comparison to NAEP high performing states, and comparison to international benchmarks. In this preliminary comparison, their findings indeed found an increase of cognitive demanding standards in English and math, but only increased focus in math. These findings are pertinent to the criticisms of CCSS in the sense that as the cognitive demand becomes higher, yet the focus relatively the same, educators are asking students to do much more rigorous thinking. This poses a potential problem for educators teaching and students learning in a finite amount of time and days within the school

year. It also echoes concerns from personal experience and editorials about the ability of students from diverse backgrounds to access said curriculum.

## THE CCSS: THE UNDENIABLE REALITY

CCSS arose from the dismal data indicating that students educated in the United States were not prepared for the demands of college and a career in a global economy. The data for students adversely impacted by socioeconomic factors were even more disheartening (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and indicated that the gaps between school preparation and real life were even greater chasms in comparison to those where not socioeconomically disadvantaged. There are plenty of texts in the educational field regarding the academic achievement, or lack thereof, for students with diverse backgrounds, specifically our socioeconomically disadvantaged children, our English language learners, and our students with disabilities. For instance, there is a myriad of literature discussing the disproportionality of minority students, English language learners, and/or students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds being identified as learning disabled or underperforming academically. In recent studies researchers found that minority students, specifically African Americans, Native Americans, and English language learners, were overrepresented in special education (Sullivan & Ball, 2013; Samson & Lesaux, 2008). But more importantly, that teachers were unprepared to meet the needs of students of diversity (Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, & Mims, 2000), which consequently contributed to minority students' overidentification in special education. Thus CCSS implementation is full of questions regarding how to best serve diverse populations.

The CCSS acknowledges diverse populations of students and offers entry points for discussion of best practice by providing information on the application of CCSS to diverse populations. Additionally, the standards include information on factors when considering educating and implementing CCSS for diverse students. However CCSS is not a curriculum, but a set of standards and of progressive learning milestones. In other words, it does not specify what to teach, but does specify what students at each grade level should know before moving on to the next grade. In addition, the CCSS offers a host of resources to help diverse learners access the standards. CCSS holds diverse learners to the same high standards, and represents a chance to promote a culture of high expectations for everyone.

## UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND EQUITY

The goal for every student is to learn, but not every child learns in the same way. This idea is not particularly new, especially given the knowledge that our classrooms are wide landscapes of diversity. Yet, year after year educators question how they can bridge and overcome the achievement gap between our higher performing students and subgroups of students who have diverse learning needs. This repetitive question has given rise to the inherent awareness of the confines and inequities within the system of education. This awareness has been instrumental in the increased discussion about our school system from a critical pedagogy lens, investigating ways to increase social justice in education, and finding access points for all learners.

In Hackman and Rauscher's (2004) discussion about social justice education (SJE) and universal design for learning, the authors define SJE as having three important goals: increasing "social responsibility, student empowerment, and the equitable distribution of resources" (p. 114). Classrooms that employ SJE are actively questioning topics in relation to an antioppressive critique, and encouraging agency within students to effect change for their communities and the world at large. In alignment with many of the tenets of CCSS, where students are being asked to think critically about course content, provide evidence and reasoning, infer, and draw conclusions. SJE classrooms also encourage students to reflect about their own ideas, personal experiences, and biases in regards to marginalization and oppression. SJE takes a stance of advocacy and activism with the ultimate outcome of bringing more equity to the classroom and the world at large.

The overlap of this book with social justice education practices lay within the ultimate outcome of SJE, increasing equity in the classroom, particularly with our most marginalized populations of students: our students of diversity. Today teachers are expected to compensate for variation among their students by adapting how they present information, structure assignments, and test for understanding. Individual adaptations can be very time consuming; however, the adaptations may be built into the curriculum materials, thanks to universal design for learning (UDL). UDL provides a pedagogical approach that infuses SJE outcomes of equity by providing multiple access points for learners to engage in the content.

UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution—but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. As we work with students in classrooms, we have noticed that individuals

bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning (Universal Design Learning Guidelines, n.d.). Universal design for learning (UDL) approaches curriculum design with diversity as a central belief that guides the curriculum. UDL has its roots in architecture and urban planning. Ramps, automatic doors, and curb cuts were created to provide access to people with physical disabilities but actually ease access for everyone. The design is proactive to incorporate appropriate access and forgoes the need to retrofit the building at a later date (Higbee, 2009). When it comes to curriculum design, the teachers are analogous to architects. In a UDL approach, teachers design curriculum and take into account the learning needs of their learners immediately. It embraces the concept of improved access for everyone and applies it to curriculum materials and teaching methods.

Both UDL and SJE share and enhance one another. First, both approaches believe in provision of access to education with education being instrumental factors in determining student and eventually adult success. Both pedagogical approaches emphasize the need to provide classroom environments that are nurturing, safe, and accessible spaces to thrive in. Next, both approaches value student diversity and embrace the diversity within the content and the classroom. The approaches recognize that true student empowerment is possible if students are given equitable access (Hackman & Rauscher, 2004). For the purpose of this book, we will focus on the ultimate SJE goal of creating equity in the classroom by using UDL as a pedagogical approach.

## UDL AND CCSS

How does UDL fit into the new Common Core standards? UDL is included in the section of the CCSS called, "Application to Students With Disabilities." In this section the authors refer to the definition laid out in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (PL 110–135). All students can benefit from the types of instruction used to reach learners "on the margins," as the learning needs of all individuals vary a great deal. As such, UDL should be used within inclusive general education classrooms. Although this is the only explicit mention of UDL in the CCSS, there are many concepts embedded throughout the CCSS that are aligned with the UDL framework.

Curricula (goals, methods, materials, and assessments) designed using UDL put an emphasis on creating effective and flexible goals, and the CCSS provides an important framework for thinking about what goals will be most effective. UDL emphasizes that an effective goal must be flexible enough to allow learners multiple ways to successfully meet it. To do this,

the standard must not embed the means (the how) with the goal (the what). What do we mean by this? One good example is from the mathematics standards: "Apply and extend previous understandings of multiplication and division and of fractions to multiply and divide rational numbers." (Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, Grade 7, The Number System, 7.NS, item 2, p.48). This standard is flexible enough that all learners can meet this goal because it does not specify how it must be done.

Students with diverse learning needs are a heterogeneous group with one common characteristic: the presence of learning challenges that hinder their ability to benefit from general education independently. Therefore, how these high standards are taught and assessed is of the utmost importance in reaching diverse students. In order for students with diverse learning needs to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking, and listening (English language arts), their instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations.

## FOSTERING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Teacher leadership is a promising vehicle for making instruction accessible to all learners. While teacher leadership is not a new consideration for educational practitioners who are involved in school improvement, what is emergent is the "increased recognition of teacher leadership, visions of expanded leadership roles, and new hope for the contributions these expanded roles might make in improving schools" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Teacher leadership has arisen as an acceptable form of leadership, where top-down, hierarchical models once dominated school systems. Not to say that some forms of formal leadership should not exit—they are necessary to the daily operations of schools. However, formal leadership as it once existed is beginning to morph. Leadership is expanding its reach in school systems, from small leadership teams, to expanded roles that include the crucial human capital that before had been ignored. The former model of school leadership with a few administrators at the top who plan, deliberate, and then disseminate ideas and initiatives has backfired as a viable model for school change. Consequentially, teacher leadership has grown out of the necessity for ideas and initiatives to be more closely tied to the classroom and to the teacher-leaders who are directly involved in inquiry and who can link data to real solutions.

Thus, teacher leadership is not an add-on to a site's growth plan. Rather it is an essential platform by which school decision makers, both at school sites and at district offices, should approach school growth and the

professionalization of teachers (Lieberman, Sax, & Miles, 2000). Teacher leadership has become an accepted form of leadership by educational leaders, in part, because organizational research suggests that involvement from all individuals at all levels of an organization is instrumental in organizational change (Ogway & Bossert, 1995; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Top-down hierarchies just do not work when an organization needs to make systemic change and growth.

To this end, many formal school leaders have convened site leadership teams (SLTs) to expand the roles of teachers beyond their traditional classroom duties. Along with site leadership teams, teacher leaders have also begun to utilize PLCs, which if done organically and according to inquiries built from within a site, can have impact on student learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Most recently because of the implementation of the new Common Core, teacher leaders have grappled with how to make the Common Core reachable for all learners, especially those who have diverse learning needs. By not limiting the reach of who can be a leader, schools tap into the professional knowledge and expertise that the teaching force owns. By working in creative ways, a school site can enact leadership from all of its members, culling content expertise, pedagogical insights, and practitioner spirit. When school sites only elect to tap into a few teacher leaders, their impact is stunted due to the message of elitism that is sent to the professional workforce. When leadership is viewed as a school-wide process of which each member is a part, empowerment unfolds (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Another added benefit is the localization of leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). When teacher leaders are directly influencing daily operations, curricular and instructional decisions, and modes of assessment, then data becomes more important to the teachers; therefore, teacher leaders have more impact. Alternately, models of leadership that take their direction from outside sources (site and district administration, oversight agencies) are removed from daily operations, which causes information sluggishness and lack of buy-in by teachers.

Outsiders do not know the unique makeup of each school and come in with one-size-fits-all initiatives. For improvement to take place at the instructional level, teachers need to be involved at the classroom level and with peers. To impact schools where teachers are working together for the good of all children, a number of teachers have sought out and implemented practices that work with diverse populations, and they are sharing these practices in a host of ways. Teachers observe and coach one another; they also plan, analyze data trends together, and make informed decisions based on the data. This increases equity for all learners because teachers are dialing in to what each student needs, rather than shooting for the middle. Teacher leaders mediate on behalf of diverse learners; they function as action researchers, targeting students' specific learning

needs and drawing critically upon external resources and expertise when required. They are brokers of school improvement, where they secure links within schools and the opportunities for meaningful learning by teachers is maximized. Teacher leaders concern themselves with a professional environment, becoming participative leaders. They seek to include all teachers, engendering a sense of ownership through collaborative enterprise (Harris, 2013). Ultimately, teacher leaders create equitable access for students when they demonstrate strategies and support other teachers in the implementation of those strategies.

The problem has been that this kind of information sharing and support historically has not been systemic. Personal and professional stances have separated teachers from coming together to improve learning situations for diverse learners. However, a few heroes have employed strategies and won in their individual classrooms, but few have impacted their colleagues. This stems from the top-down nature of most school systems. Teachers often are left out of critical conversations where their voices can make the difference for students of diversity. Traditionally, teachers have worked in silos, not interacting with other content experts about data. However, schools that have tapped into teacher leaders are seeing the impact on their diverse populations. So how can administrators and local agencies tap into this powerful human resource and reshape school communities so that all teachers can be highly effective with students of diversity?

For school administrators to feel safe to utilize teacher leaders, they need to have clarity about what teacher leaders do and do not do. Teacher leadership is not a model where teachers have equal control with administrators over schools. Administrators hold the responsibility of school improvement and the direction the school needs to move. In fact, much of the functionality of teacher leadership falls within the lines of informal leading, not formal leadership. We agree with Jackson et al. (2010) who contend that, "Teacher leaders can be formally acknowledged, or can emerge spontaneously from exercising leadership when a need, possibility, or opportunity arises." Informal leadership crops up when teachers are empowered to make decisions and have control over instruction, curriculum, and assessment. They are trusted to make decisions and have transparent communication with their administration. Informal leadership takes place in the form of information sharing, regularly and openly. Teacher leadership essentially refers to the leadership of teachers regardless of position or designation, and as Crow, Hausman, and Schribner (2002) argue, "strengthens the web of social relationships." Teacher leaders become a strata of school governance, where their influence impacts overall school outcomes.

Although the study of teacher leadership initially arose in the late 1980s, it is presently gaining renewed esteem as PLCs and system wide

approaches are being implemented to improve schools. In fact, the arrival of the Common Core state standards against the backdrop of 21st century learning has given teacher leadership a welcome environment in which to thrive. Advocates of change are resting on the laurels of 21st century learning, which includes key areas of teacher leadership: collaboration, teamwork, and leadership. This notion of teachers as leaders at the onset of CCSS and 21st century learning is well justified; schools with rigid top-down power structures have not been successful with students of diversity.

This book will offer a lens by which to see how teacher leaders fit into the strategic planning of school improvement plans. The authors will also offer practical considerations, best practices, and strategies when implementing Common Core and applying the standards to the diverse learner. Drawing on research from teacher leadership, universal design for learning, special education, and English language learners. This book will provide a framework of how to utilize teacher leaders, as well as how to break down literacy anchor standards.

## EMBRACING ALL LEARNERS

As with any large-scale shift in education practices, there are loud and persuasive voices on both sides of the issue. There are parents and educators who argue that holding students with diverse learning needs to the same academic standards is unrealistic and unfair—for reasons of ability or practicality. We see the implementation of the Common Core standards as a historic opportunity (at last) to give students with diverse learning needs access to the same academic rigor and high expectations as mainstream students. It is our hope that the following chapters will provide more than just information that the CCSS offers for diverse learners, but rather practical and effective strategies and considerations for making CCSS accessible to all learners. Only time can tell how special education students will fare under the Common Core. As educators, remember that the majority of students with diverse learning needs are capable of much more than they and others realize. The hopes of this book are multifold. We hope to:

1. Provide educators with an understanding of diverse learner obstacles to combat the pervasive problem of over representation of diverse learners in special education; while also gaining deeper understanding of how diverse learners acquire and retain content.
2. Provide educators with a practical understanding of how to interpret the Common Core state standards, specifically the anchor standards in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and how these standards can be uncovered and made attainable to students of diversity.

3. Provide educators with a framework for planning for instruction of students with diverse needs in a proactive, equitable manner; specifically by delving into and using the universal design for learning framework.
4. {Provide educators with practical, research-based strategies that have been proven to benefit diverse learners in accessing rigorous content.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is divided into three parts: the first is foundational concepts of equity and marginalization of students of diversity; the second provides a UDL lens for increasing equity; and the third ties in all concepts to discuss sustainability and systemic change by fostering teacher leadership. Although our readers can surpass Part I to get to the pedagogical approaches of Part II that they can implement immediately in the classroom, we encourage our readers to take the time to read and understand the conceptual underpinnings that this book is based upon. In Part 1 of the book, we focus on building fundamental understandings of the concepts and context in which this book is situated. Part 2 will address the practical applications of the concepts and context as they relate to Common Core literacy standards. Finally, Part III will extend all of the concepts presented with a call for systemic changes through teacher leadership.

All of the chapters will provide the reader with "preparation and reflection" questions, as well as resources to address each reader's own unique learning style. The resources provided are designed to tap into multimodality learning. We offer links to videos, podcasts, websites for extended resources, and recommended books on topics that you may want to investigate more deeply. You will encounter the graphic (Figure 1) to help guide and support your thinking throughout the rest of this book.

## CHAPTER 1: OUT OF REACH: MARGINALIZING THE DIVERSE LEARNER

Every child, every individual is unique in his or her own way. For the purposes of this book, we will investigate the children who have been historically marginalized due to socioeconomic factors, second language acquisition, culture and ethnicity, and disabilities. We will refer to this population as diverse children, diverse learners, or students of diversity. Students of diversity are often misunderstood. Their learning needs may be overlooked, misinterpreted, or they don't respond to our instruction as we hope or expect. Diverse learners have been held at a distance and

have historically under performed. Chapter 1 will investigate the pervasive reasons why students of diversity have been marginalized.

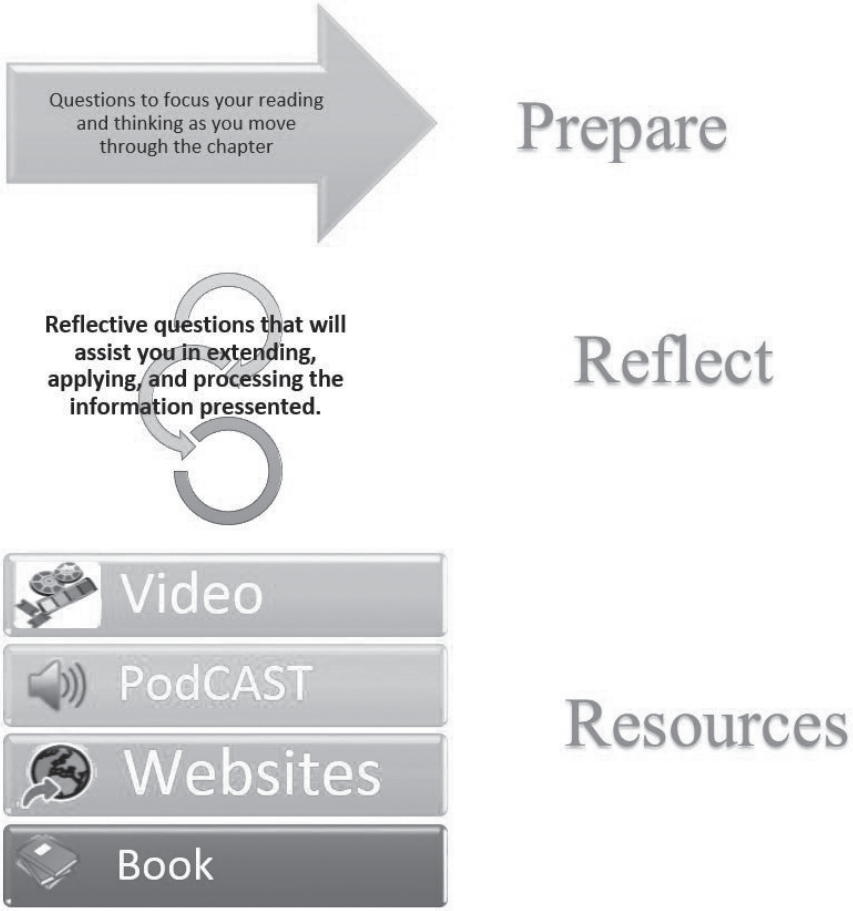


**Figure 1.**

## CHAPTER 2: REACHING OUT, A CASE FOR UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Disabilities and the view of difference as a deficit is a social construct, which really indicates a problem with curriculum rather than a problem that is inherent in the individual learner (Maxam & Henderson, 2013). If the problem is with the curriculum, then educators must find ways to provide

multiple entry points for all learners to access and learn the curriculum. In order to do this, educators would benefit from careful planning to account for diversity. Thus, Chapter 2 will discuss the framework of universal design for learning (UDL). Specifically, we will discuss the three major processes of UDL: the content (what), the product (how), and the process (why) of learning. All chapters in Part II will use the UDL framework to present sample lessons and strategies. Readers will need to understand the UDL framework in order to fully understand how to implement the strategies presented in Part II of the book.

## WITHIN REACH, PROVIDING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE COMMON CORE LITERACY STANDARDS

In several chapters of this book, we will focus on UDL as an approach to planning that may be implemented immediately to assist students of diversity in accessing Common Core state standards. These chapters will begin with guiding structures for how and why the strategies were chosen. The first guiding structure is a description and deconstruction of the anchor standards in English language arts for the content domain (i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The second guiding structure is a brief review of the existing research on instructional practices within that content domain and consequently a rationale of why certain strategies were chosen to address the needs of diverse learners. Next, the strategies will be organized to illustrate how the strategies provide universal access to diverse learners using UDL principles and guidelines.

## EMBRACING EQUITY SCHOOL WIDE, FOSTERING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

In Chapter 6 of this book will examine what a teacher leader is and how this leadership structure is significant in creating a culture of equity for all students. Chapter 6 starts out by looking at how teachers can become leaders: In this chapter a tiered approach to leadership is outlined, including the concept of distributed leadership where active involvement on the large scale is essential for change to occur (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). The chapter then shifts focus to consider teacher-leader roles, so that a focus on pedagogy and learning take the forefront. The third portion of this chapter reveals the intersection between teacher leadership and UDL, where targets for teacher leadership and dispositions are discussed. Finally, the teacher leadership standards are articulated with UDL in mind.

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