

# Using the Comprehensive Support Model to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities

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*The whole village must take responsibility for the education of its children and youth. This is particularly critical for children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds with learning disabilities (LD). Since the establishment of the LD category, there have been different and conflicting rationalizations for the extremely elevated growth in the identification of these students. Despite these rationalizations, one important point of agreement seems to be very clear; that is, a comprehensive educational approach must be at work to maximize the fullest potential of these students. Put another way, to work with these students in culturally responsive ways, general and special educators must take advantage of the Comprehensive Support Model (CSM). This mutually inclusive model collaboratively involves the student, family, school, community, and government in working with CLD students with LD. This whole village concept is the focus of this article*

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**L**earning disabilities (LD) is a dynamic, multifaceted, and ever-changing area of special education. Since the inception of the LD terminology by Samuel Kirk more than 45 years ago, there have been countless individuals, parental advocacy and interest groups, legal and legislative initiatives, federal policies and protocols, research queries and findings, as well as ethical and theoretical debates that have contributed significantly to this field (Bender, 2004; Fletcher et al., 2002). Early in LD history, Kirk and his colleagues, for the most part, responded to the pleas and outcries of parents who felt their children who learned “differently,” were either (a) inappropriately identified and placed in classrooms for students with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, or (b) struggled with access to the general education curriculum within the general education classroom (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). To a large measure, these parents wanted some type of specialized instruction that would help their children achieve and even excel academically.

At the outset, parents and related professionals in the LD field were encouraged that their children’s academic struggle could be identified and then “cured” with new-found interest. And following suit, many researchers went on a quest to find assessment and instructional strategies that would respond to the voices of parents and advocacy groups. These actions led to the development of several tests for identifying the specific nature of LD, as well as innumerable interventions—some of which were wasteful and potentially dangerous (Hallahan et al., 2009; Vaughn et al., 2000). Re-

ports and extensive documentation of the narrow and frequently detrimental effects of these assessments and interventions led to their ultimate demise in the field (see Hallahan et al.). While these activities sparked interests of educators and researchers, the civil rights movement created additional fuel for educational advocacy. From the 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education* to the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, America experienced a significant political and legislative evolution. The civil rights issues addressed during this movement played a pivotal role within the disability movement. As the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that “separate was not equal” in the school system and the greater national communities, so was the case for disability communities; yet, LD was rife with disproportional placement of CLD students into the most restrictive settings (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002).

Though significant progress has been made in the establishment, implementation, and evaluation of effective instructional interventions for students with LD (Gargiulo, 2006; Vaughn et al., 2000), issues surrounding inappropriate assessment and placement practices in LD still plague researchers and school systems. With all of the safeguards in testing and interventions, academic accountability, curriculum-based assessments, differentiated instructional strategies, Response-to-Intervention (RTI), discrepancy models, and early intervention, the LD field has morphed into a different creature—one not intended by its originators. It has become fraught with issues of misidentification, over- and underrepresentation of CLD students, and legalistic and legislative mandates with no substantial funding or training for students, parents, staff, or community at large. In this article, we discuss how to work effectively with CLD students with LD using the CSM.

### UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LD

The term, *learning disability*, came into existence with the development of the Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities in 1963 and refers to a group of disorders that directly impact academic performance. Following is the most current federal definition of LD as presented by the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA):

The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

The academic outcomes of students with LD are appalling. About a decade ago, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) found that approximately 35% of secondary school students with LD received the standard general education grade-level curriculum used for other students in their academic classes. However, more than half of the students with LD (i.e., 52%) have teachers who reported making some modifications to the general education curriculum. For another

11%, substantial modifications were made to the general education curriculum they received, and 2% received a specialized curriculum (Newman, 2006). As a result, by the time they enter secondary school, students with LD performed an average of 3.3 years below grade level in both reading and mathematics. In addition, one-fourth of students dropped out of school, with a little over 45% only having regular paid jobs within 2 years of leaving school (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009). Without doubt, the extent of these academic deficiencies raises important questions not only about the limited use of appropriate accommodations needed to access the general education curriculum or the lack of guidance provided to general education teachers in meeting students' needs, but more so the lack of involvement of the student, school, family, community, and government agencies in the learning process (Obiakor, 2007; Obiakor, Grant, & Dooley, 2002; Vaughn et al., 2000).

Given the aforementioned substandard outcomes for students with LD, it is critical to ask, Why are schools failing to provide these students with intensive interventions needed for both academic and lifelong success? Apparently, there are disjointed and disconnected policies, procedures, strategies, and protocols that are in place to address the overall needs of students with LD. In much of the research on these students, there seems to be a void in the connection between the student, the family, the school, the greater community, and the government. These important entities of the CSM highlight the collaboration of all stakeholders to bring about success for all learners, especially those with LD (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009; Obiakor, 2007; Obiakor et al., 2002; Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor, & Smith, 2002; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Policy makers, governmental agencies, students, educators, and parents must find a way to effectively address challenges related to providing appropriate accommodations and modifications.

### TRADITIONAL STRUGGLES IN THE LD CLASSIFICATION

Since the establishment of the LD category, there has been more than a 250% increase in the number of students classified as having LD (Vaughn et al., 2003). There are several conflicting rationalizations for the unusual growth in the identification of these students (Utley & Obiakor, 2001). For example, some view the growth as a consequence of a growing field, while others view it as a dumping ground for those who fail in the general education setting. Many experts in the field of LD believe children identified with a specific learning disability (SLD) are "victims of poor teaching" or "teaching-disabled." Practically, all children can learn to read if taught, but many do not learn to read because their teachers are not adequately prepared (Lyon et al., 2001). Regardless of the many possible reasons for the increased identification of students with LD, research shows that (a) the growth rate is extremely elevated and out of control, (b) the heterogeneity of individuals identified is disproportionate, and (c) many students are either misidentified or unidentified (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

Establishing a suitable criterion for LD classification has been the single most controversial, contentious, and culturally biased issue plaguing the field of LD (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009; Hallahan et al., 2009; Vaughn et al., 2003). At the center of the controversy about LD identification is the sole use of the IQ-achievement discrepancy model for classification and placement for services. While not a legally

mandated assessment, the IQ-achievement discrepancy model is the most commonly used, often time culturally biased procedure for documenting a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more areas—oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, or mathematical skills (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The IQ-discrepancy criterion model is potentially detrimental to at-risk students because it postpones the intervention until the students' achievement is so low that the discrepancy is achieved. Traditional referral practices rely on teachers noticing that a student is having severe learning difficulties and needs additional help (i.e., referral for special education services). This less than reliable practice leaves the burden for screening and implementation of pre-referral strategies on the teacher.

For at-risk students, and particularly those from CLD backgrounds identified as having a SLD, identification occurs at an age when academic problems are difficult, at best, to remediate with the most intense intervention efforts (Torgesen et al., 2001). The above mentioned IQ-achievement discrepancy is burdened with measurement and theoretical problems; and few cognitive or affective characteristics differentiate poor readers with discrepancies from those without discrepancies (Stuebing et al., 2002). This “wait to fail” model has several disadvantages that include (a) using IQ as an indicator of potential; (b) late identification of students who may have special needs; (c) inaccurate screening through teacher observation; (d) the issue of false negatives (i.e., unidentified students who are not provided with the necessary services or provided services too late); (e) using of identification measures that are not instructionally based; (f) creating weak relationships to interventions (i.e., what needs to be taught, how to teach, and monitoring progress) (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003; Gresham, 2002; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The IQ discrepancy or “wait to fail” model additionally does not lead to “closing the achievement gap” for most students placed in special education programs. For many students placed in those programs, minimal academic gains are achieved; and few, if any, ever leave special education placements (National Research Council [NRC], 2002). Clearly, issues of appropriate identification and classification generate challenges in special education assessment. As disability classification criteria and trends in services change, further modifications in special education assessment practices can be expected (see NRC).

### **DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES AND THE LD CONSTRUCT**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has ushered in new demographic realities for education in the United States—approximately one-third of U.S. students are either African American, Hispanic, or Asian American. And by the year 2020, approximately half of the entire school population in the U.S. will be students from CLD backgrounds (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Many of these children are living in poverty within the urban centers; and poverty has been shown to have a harmful effect on academic performance, self-esteem, and behavior (Garguilo, 2006; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Williams & Obiakor, 2009). According to Garguilo, many urban students classified as having a learning disability are not truly learning-disabled, rather they might be children ravaged by poverty and poor teaching.

Teachers and service providers are confronted with significant challenges of cultural dissonance and bias in their attempts to address educational needs of CLD students, particularly when they have limited English proficiency. One of the major issues for professionals who work with CLD students is distinguishing between learning problems that may arise from cultural differences or poor teaching and those that are due to learning disabilities (Obiakor, 2007). It is imperative that teachers make every effort to recognize distinctions between cultural differences and disabilities. Cultural and linguistic differences are sometimes interpreted as disabilities; yet in reality, more than 1 million students from CLD backgrounds have LD (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Data compiled by the federal government on CLD students who have learning disabilities are as follows: Whites 9%, African American/Black 13%, Hispanic 8%, American Indian/Alaskan Native 14%, and Asian/Pacific Islander 5% (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Because of the recursive issues about disproportionate representation of CLD learners in special education, Congress now requires that states maintain records according to race and ethnicity for enrollment, educational placement, school exiting status, and discipline.

The socio-political, historically rooted issue of disproportionate representation of CLD students in high incidence special education categories (e.g., LD) has been a source of debate for educators, policymakers, researchers, parents, and community stakeholders (Artiles et al., 2002; Obiakor, 2001). Dunn (1968) documented the problem of overrepresentation when he questioned the feasibility and impartiality of special-education placements for CLD and economically disadvantaged students in high incidence disability categories of mental retardation, LD, and emotional disturbance. Thirty-five years after the 1975 passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), the issue of disproportionate representation of students from CLD backgrounds is still a wide-ranging and recurrent problem throughout the nation. At the core of CLD disproportion are traditional referral and assessment processes. Many questions have been raised about the efficacy of teacher referrals, particularly how they relate to teacher bias and subjectivity in evaluating student performance and behavior (NRC, 2002; Ysseldyke, 2001).

Researchers investigating teacher referrals have revealed that teachers refer children who are “problematic” to them. These referrals are generally based on affective, contextual, and/or socio-political beliefs (Dunn, 1968; NRC, 2002; Ysseldyke, 2001). For instance, Dunn noted that there were critical instructional and organizational areas of special education that, if not addressed, would lead to failed educational policies and have far-reaching national repercussions. He urged educators to re-examine the status and efficacy of special education by assessing the debilitating effects of (a) pejorative labels on children, (b) teachers’ attitudes, and (c) changes in schools’ organization, curriculum, and personnel. Clearly, the recursive dilemma of CLD student overrepresentation in LD shows factors such as unconscious racial biases of teachers (who are primarily responsible for referral to special education services), cultural differences, lack of highly qualified/culturally responsive teachers, resource inequalities, inappropriate and unrealistic teacher expectations, subjective referral practices, and unjustifiable reliance on IQ as contributive factors to this national crisis (Obiakor, 1999, 2001; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). Despite an array of litigation, legislative initiatives, pedagogical and procedural strategies, federal com-

pliance mandates, and monitoring and enforcement protocols, there has been no significant change in the elevated patterns of teacher referrals and the subsequent placement of CLD students in special education programs.

### **THE CSM AS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODEL**

There is no doubt that there has been extensive discussion and debate on biological, environmental, socio-political, historical, and teacher biases in CLD student referral factors that contribute to disproportionate representation in high incidence special education programs. Despite these discussions and debates, educators and service providers continue to struggle with the disproportionate issues in the LD field. We believe to be culturally responsive, the participating entities of the CSM (i.e., the student, family, school, community, and government) must be involved in working with CLD students with LD (Obiakor, 1994, 2007, 2008; Obiakor et al., 2002). Based on the CSM, the following must be in place to foster cultural responsiveness:

- Identification, assessment, and instructional strategies that function within the context of cultural competence
- Collaborative system of community support for families that eradicates social stereotyping based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, and socioeconomic status
- Awareness and appreciation for the many family forms that value individual differences, disabilities, and strengths
- Conditions leading to violence in the home or community that cultivate a sense of safety for culturally diverse children and families
- Economic policies and human services that are pro-family by virtue of proven outcomes
- Culturally competent practices that promote in schools and in the larger society respect for differences in world-views and learning styles among individuals
- Expanded services that provide affordable quality childcare to meet varied needs of all families and children (e.g., infant and adolescent 24-hour care and weekend care)
- Collaborative community approaches to problem solving that involve students, parents, schools, and community leaders
- Problem situations of the individual and those created by, but also in, institutional barriers in the environment that are dealt with.
- Curricula that are reconfigured to eliminate the hidden curriculum and other culturally insensitive curricula variables
- Rites of passage and community service opportunities that are reinstated to cultivate a sense of belonging and resiliency in youth
- Visions that are broadened in educational reform to include economic reform and the investment in human capital

The aforementioned culturally responsive embodiments of the CSM must be targeted pedagogically to reach CLD students with LD. As a consequence, teachers and service providers must

- create instructional environments that promote academic productivity and appropriate social behaviors (i.e., making sure classrooms are safe for learning);

- take in a holistic view of instruction (i.e., valuing the kind of instruction that uses multiple variables);
- have equity as a big picture in the classroom (i.e., incorporating human respect in classroom activities);
- monitor student success (i.e., finding out if learning is actually occurring);
- engage students in small-group discussion and cooperative learning (i.e., enhancing collaboration and consultation in classroom activities);
- sequence, chunk, and organize instruction (i.e., trying to manipulate learning environments);
- engage students in higher-level thinking (i.e., practicing critical thinking);
- have adequate goals, standards, and outcomes for high quality instruction (i.e., making sure instruction responds to individual needs);
- understand students' classroom and school milieu (i.e., moving beyond acceptance to acclimatization in classroom and school activities);
- effectively manage the classroom environment (i.e., making sure classrooms are not disruptive);
- provide positive school outcomes (i.e., making sure school is rewarding).

#### **FUNCTIONALIZING THE CSM TO EDUCATE CLD LEARNERS WITH LD.**

To educate CLD learners with LD, the CSM must be functionalized and goal-directed. The components of the CSM are inextricably interwoven and each component of the CSM (i.e., the self, family, school, community, and government) collaboratively plays a role in the education of CLD learners with LD.

#### ***Valuing the Self***

Educational systems are designed to intellectually and socially develop all students into tomorrow's leaders (Obiakor, 2007). The self, in this case, represents students with LD. These students have to learn to survive and thrive in ill-equipped schools, dilapidated neighborhoods, and in spite of seemingly uncaring governments. It is unrealistic to expect these children to flourish when they are deprived of the basic necessities of life. CLD students who thrive in such adverse conditions are classified as resilient because they have the ability to successfully adapt to life in the face of social disadvantages. Clearly, CLD learners with LD have to be resilient to make it through biased methods of identification, assessment, placement, and instruction. As a consequence, changes in assessment, curriculum, instruction, and preservice training are needed to increase outcomes of these students in general and special education programs (Obiakor & Utley, 1997).

Many laws have been passed to open doors that were previously closed to CLD learners with LD. While these laws have failed in their quest to produce a perfect system, the role that these students play can help to further the full intent of these laws. These students must be helped to be responsive to the environment and take proactive steps to maximize their learning potential. The CSM encourages students to be active, motivated, and responsible members of the support system if they in-

tend to benefit from the process. Additionally, they must demonstrate self-efficacious and self-empowerment attitudes. No intervention technique will be successful unless students are involved in the process. Even with a great support system, students must be self-knowledgeable, self-loving, and self-responsible. As a consequence, teachers, families, and community members must believe in them, create success-oriented environments, and give them opportunities to grow.

### ***Valuing the Family***

Although the student is the centerpiece of the CSM, families act as the cornerstone of this model. Families are responsible for the care, love, support, and development of the child (Obiakor et al., 2002). The CSM elucidates the importance of the CLD family in creating a solid foundation for the child with LD. The substantial contributions of the family both genetically and environmentally aid and assist in shaping the CLD child with LD. It is common knowledge that the family serves as the bridge that connects the CLD student with the school. Clearly, it can never be divorced from educational and social duties and responsibilities after the CLD learner reaches compulsory age.

It is essential that the CLD family participate in schools, classrooms, sporting events, field trips, school performances, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to maximize the potential of all students with LD. When the family is actively involved in school, potential behavioral or learning problems are handled expeditiously; and comprehensive preventive and proactive techniques can be designed to create more culturally responsive general and special education classrooms for that CLD student with LD. Family empowerment extends a family atmosphere into the school and creates a home away from home for those with LD. In general and special education programs, no intervention technique will succeed without parental support and involvement.

### ***Valuing the School***

The choice of curriculum, instruction, and discipline styles can be the difference between success and failure of CLD learners with LD. These learners are forced to endure teaching styles that are Eurocentric and that do not maximize their educational potential. Consequently, some scholars and educators have argued that some of these learners are often misunderstood, misidentified, misassessed, miscategorized, and misinstructed (Obiakor, 1999, 2001, 2007; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Utley & Obiakor, 2001). It is no surprise that they are overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in programs for students with gifts and talents. These disproportionate numbers are attributed to Eurocentric interpretations and sometimes illusory conclusions by educational professionals.

Many colleges and universities have failed to satisfactorily prepare educators for today's classrooms. More than 15 years ago, Haberman (1995) asserted that upon completion of traditional teaching programs, teachers are as prepared for urban classrooms as a swimmer who prepared for the English Channel by training in the university swimming pool. As Guillaume, Zuniga-Hill, and Yee (1995) emphasized, teachers of diverse students should "commit to professional growth regarding issues of diversity" (p. 70). To correct current school problems confronting CLD

learners with LD, efforts must be made to proactively promote progressive multicultural thinking. It is essential that institutions of higher learning design more classes to respect the growing demographic shifts of the United States and equip teachers with multicultural pedagogical techniques. General and special educators must be willing to leave their comfort zones and learn to reach out to CLD students, families, and communities (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor, Obi, & Eskay, 2000). The school must keep its pulse on community and family activities, especially as they become increasingly diverse. By using resource persons from the home and community, the school reduces cultural ignorance, fosters a working relationship between the two entities, and provides learning environments that facilitate success for all children, especially those with LD. Teachers and service providers can take advantage of resource persons in the community to advance their classroom instructions (see Obiakor, 1994, 2008).

### ***Valuing the Community***

The community is a macrocosm of the family. This relationship has been described not only as intertwined but also as reciprocal (Ford & Reynolds, 2001; Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor et al., 2002). A neighborhood without a positive foundational support is without expectations, obligations, and moral codes. The connection between the environment and school generally is ignored in most discussions about reform and improvement (see Ford & Reynolds). In fact, improvements in schools are not possible unless improvements in the environment are designed. We believe general and special education reform and restructuring programs have failed because they have not fully used the resources within the environment of CLD students with LD. Resources such as clergy and community members should be incorporated into reform plans. Neighborhoods and communities have proven to have great impacts on determining the academic achievement, depression level, emotional development, social behavior, and self-esteem of CLD students with LD (Ford & Reynolds, 2001; Obiakor, 2008).

The whole village must be responsible to raise a responsible child. This is especially critical for CLD learners with LD. Peterson (1992) noted that “community in itself is more important to learning than any method or technique. When community exists, learning is strengthened—everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive. Well-formed ideas and intentions amount to little without a community to bring them to life” (p. 2). General and special educators can ill-afford to divorce themselves from the community, and vice versa. Obstacles that face communities will continually manifest themselves in schools, and the way educators address them will have life-lasting implications (Larrivee, 1992; Lovitt, 2000). The impetus behind the CSM is to remove fraudulent multicultural paradigms employed in many schools and the society as a whole. Fraudulent multiculturalism creates a fraudulent sense of community where problems are swept under the rug. For intervention to succeed in general and special education programs for CLD students with LD, communities must be involved in schools (Ford & Reynolds, 2001).

### ***Valuing the Government***

The landmark Supreme Court case of *Plessey v. Ferguson* in 1896 mandated that races could be separated as long as facilities for each group were commensurate. This era, known by many as the Jim Crow era, blatantly disregarded the law because institutions were separate but unequal. The critical question is, How much has the government done to change these injustices over the past years for CLD learners with LD? In 1954, *Plessey v. Ferguson* was ruled unconstitutional with the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision that led the initiative to desegregate public schools. Although schools were being desegregated, it was evident that children from CLD backgrounds were being systematically removed from the general classroom. The legislative branch of the government stepped in to prevent CLD students from being disproportionately placed in special education classes based on the use of intelligence tests alone. Other exemplary litigations (e.g., the 1967 *Hobson v. Hanson* case, the 1970 *Diana v. State Board of California* case, and the 1972 *Larry P. v. Riles* case) have helped to foster equality in educational programming.

Through important legislative mandates (e.g., the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), the government has tried to enhance possibilities for a free and appropriate education for CLD learners with LD. Although these legislative efforts are progressive and helpful, they are not in themselves the cure-all. The spirit of these laws has sometimes been missed, and as a consequence, savage inequalities continue to exist in many schools today (Kozol, 1991). In addition, many of these government laws have guaranteed school funding for CLD learners with LD on local, state, and federal levels; ironically though, inadequate funding continues to be a problem.

It is essential to note that government initiatives, such as Goals 2000, have allowed school districts to receive resources at local and state levels to implement divergent educational programs for all students, including those with LD. In addition, governments have funded and awarded grants to various institutions of higher learning and community organizations that aspire to design innovative programs for CLD students with LD. For instance, to help bridge economic and social gaps between people, notable efforts such as Charter and Choice Schools have been supported to create opportunities for all students, including those LD. Clearly, governmental agencies can hold institutions accountable and mandate subsequent allocation or non-allocation to foster the compliance of rules, regulations, and positive outcomes for CLD students with LD. Local, state, and federal governments must be involved in upholding the laws. There should be accountability at all educational levels for students with LD; and the government must respect and enforce the legislation passed to ensure equality for all its citizenry. The CSM acknowledges the government as an inevitable force to fight injustices and enhance educational equality and quality for all learners; especially those with LD (see Obiakor, et al., 2002; Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor et al., 2002).

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have addressed the role of the CSM as a culturally sensitive intervention model for CLD students with LD. This model integrates efforts of the self (i.e., learner), family, school, community, and government in responding to the needs of all students, especially those with LD. We believe the student has a role to play. In addition, families, both traditional and non-traditional, must continue to be central stakeholders in planning educational services to maximize the potential of CLD students with LD. General and special educators and other service providers must employ CLD family advocates whose primary work would be to forge educational partnerships with CLD students and the greater community. Local, state, and federal governments should be utilized for continual funding and for holding institutions accountable to ensure that CLD students with LD receive an appropriate education that meets their needs. In the end, educational services must be provided in an atmosphere of respect for the CLD family and an environment where communication is an ongoing priority.

The CSM has global implications for general and special education. We need to know what others are doing to help students with LD. If we can work together in our classrooms, families, communities, and governments, we can then work together in our global world. Shifting paradigms and powers can be a painstaking process; and as educators, we must be willing to step outside of our comfort zones to discover new intervention techniques for CLD students with LD. In a school where the CSM is implemented with integrity and fidelity, “learning” becomes a noncontroversial phenomenon that increases the goodness and quality of classroom activities for all students with learning problems. Our mission must be clear—we cannot help CLD students with LD in educational settings without taking advantage of their “selves,” families, schools, communities, and governments.

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