Building an Inclusive Community of Practice: Four Simple Questions

Persistent problems of implementation remain challenging because they require crossing many boundaries to ensure progress in practice. These issues are complex, interconnected and can look different from the perspective of various implementers. In these situations, we encourage leaders to use four simple questions:

1. Who cares about this issue and why?

Answering this question permits leaders to think beyond special education, and even outside education, to get a 'big picture' of the issue in practice.

Who Cares?	Why do they care?

2. What work is already underway separately?

Recognizing the work of others is critical to developing allies. Respecting the history that others have on an issue is critical to engagement.

Organization/Group	Initiative/Document/Tool	Unique Vocabulary/ Difference in Perspective	Value to Our Common Interest

3. What shared work could unite us?

Relationship building takes time! Shared activities make a start and lead to bigger opportunities.

Activities that might have value	For each group	For all groups
Defining a shared problem		
Information exchanges		
Productive inquires		
Joint events		
Problem solving		
Boundary collaboration		
Etc.		

3. How can we deepen our connections?

A single outreach won't yield much when we want to change practice. Interactions must be ongoing. Remember: if a group is important to our outcomes…they aren't any less important because they don't accept our invitations. Keep inviting!

Group	How can we support and connect to their work on this issue?	How can they support and connect to our work on this issue?