**Touchstones for Success:   
Using Research on Inclusion to Inform Evidence-based Practices  
DRAFT in PROGRESS FEB. 2010**Kimberly Rombach  
SUNY Cortland

**Audience and Intention**This book is intended to be used for teacher preparation programs and for teachers new to working in inclusive settings. It’s about how to *purposefully plan* for teaching in inclusive classrooms. Each book chapter identifies, interprets and transforms current research findings into easily accessible ‘touchstones’ to plan for and implement successful inclusive education practices.

**Introduction** America’s classroom demographics have changed substantially throughout the past thirty years and among the greatest of changes include where and how students with disabilities are taught. For example, prior to 1975 only 1 in 5 students with disabilities was taught in a public school setting and more than one million children had no legal rights to attend public schools (National Center on Disability, 2000). By 2005, federal laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) were put in place to ensure that all children with disabilities are taught in public school settings. Currently, over half of all students with disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their school day in general education classrooms (NCES, 2007). The initial laws regarding students with disabilities had a central goal to provide students with disabilities a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, but today we have a more current challenge. As of 2006, more than six million students with disabilities received services through IDEA (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006) and our current task is to improve their educational outcomes in their public school settings.

Classroom teachers are increasingly held accountable to maximize their students’ outcomes and it is important that teachers implement evidence-based instructional methods to do so. However, classroom teachers and educational researchers often sense a gap between university theory and research-based instruction and the realities of classroom practice. This is not surprising because both groups of people reside in different contexts and therefore, often have parallel, but distinct focal points. Classroom teachers’ goals are to address the immediate, day-to-day educational needs of their current students while researchers aim to disseminate research findings to benefit future classroom teachers’ instruction and future students’ learning. This gap often results in classroom teachers implementing prompt, trial-and-error decision-making rather than applying out-of-reach research findings to their instructional decisions. Therefore, the task at hand is to make studies’ findings more accessible and meaningful to classroom teachers so research-based recommendations can be directly implemented to help maximize students’ learning (Hammersley, 2007). Yet, how might we go about doing so?  
 Years ago I was introduced to the idea of a touchstone. Historically, a touchstone is a hard black stone that was used for performing a test to identify gold. When gold was lightly rubbed across a touchstone, a streak would be left on the stone, revealing its purity to the experienced examiner. Throughout the world, gold has been cherished as a precious metal with great value. As a result, it has been used symbolically to identify high standards, excellence and wisdom. Blending the ancient practice and symbolism, a metaphor emerged; the term touchstone is now used to identify a reference point against which other things are evaluated, and can serve as a criterion to measure excellence.

The purpose of this text is to identify, synthesize and clarify current research-based findings on inclusion that are most relevant to planning and implementing inclusive classroom instruction. The synthesized and clarified findings, identified as touchstones, are provided in an accessible, easy-to-read format so they can inform teachers’ planning and instructional decision-making.

**Annotated Book Chapters**

**Chapter 1: Defining Inclusion**

Inclusion is a term that is used frequently in educational conversations yet is often unknowingly defined differently by those communicating. This is so important for readers to understand. This chapter will include the following:  
What are teachers setting out to do? Who to teach? Where? When? Why?   
  
Defining the service delivery model that you will use for all students.   
  
What do I mean by inclusion? What does inclusion mean? This term is overused and misunderstood… It has multiple meanings. Discuss research findings and issues with synthesizing findings. IDEA, special ed law students with disabilities have access to the curriculum,

There has been some effort to synthesize research findings on inclusion. However, efforts to do so have been confounded and are often not readily understood.

Use the inclusion definition instrument to clearly define inclusion,   
clarifying research synthesis on inclusion, simplify

**Chapter 2: Personal Beliefs, Professional Philosophies**

Reflecting on own schooling, understanding personal perspectives and limitations. Paradigm shift Transformative Learning Theory… Children are children. Don’t you just love the saying, “Label jars, not people”? In a classroom, we need to determine who needs what. All students are equally worthwhile. Equally worthwhile. How can we convey that in all that we do? I believe that all professional decisions are ultimately a reflection of our personal beliefs. It’s all about personal beliefs.

Most important touchstones, influential touchstones, significant touchstones, prime touchstones (prime applies to what is first in comparison with others, and to what is the best quality),

**Chapter 3: Creating the Learning Context**

Establishing a caring classroom community. How to do it? What to avoid? Language, physical structure, Starting with hello, good morning. It’s good to see you today. Community builders/breakers. Safe, productive. How might this affect students’ learning?

**Chapter 4: Who’s here?: Who are the students?**

Who’s in your classroom? What are the goals of each student? What information is needed daily for planning? Gathering important information from IEPs. All students are equally worthwhile. Be with students. Know them well. Supporting all students. Understanding geodemographics and its importance in inclusive contexts. What is geodemographics? How might schools identify this and what might be identified? What does this imply? I propose a geodemographic analysis of each school. Identifying school influences on community demographics. School Geodemographics = the study of the effects of location on students’ schooling outcomes. Whose classroom? Who else was there? The science of profiling people based on where they were taught. Specific information on each disability might not be as necessary to understand as gaining skills and expertise related to providing academic, behavioral and social supports to best meet the needs of each student. “strengths-based, person-centered” (Fisher, Frey & Thousand, p. 48, 2003).

Historically, geodemography has been used to classify neighborhoods with references to groups of people living in poverty and having distinct cultural and ethnic characteristics. Sorting children can be discriminating, damaging,

Geodemography – the analysis of people by where they live, the study of the effects of location on students’ academic and social achievement.

Geodemographic analysis and the relevance of it when analyzing students’ … and as a tool for…

Geodemographic clustering of students with disabilities, of students with high achievement, Analyzing student clusters,

Geodemographic analysis: A tool for …

**Chapter 5: Who’s here?: Parents and Community members** Meaningful involvement, parents as partners IDEA

Ryndak & Downing, 1996

**Chapter 6: Who’s here?: Teaching Models Which works best when?**

How might this affect students’ learning?

**Chapter 7: Planning for academic success** IEPs and IEPs at a glancemultiple and varied everything -- how to make multiple representations in different ways.

Include info on curriculum and standards

Differentiation tomlinson

cooperative learning

multiple intelligences  
student choices

study buddies,   
daily routines

IEP necessities

RTI

Standards based everything

Connect everything to something

**Chapter 8: Planning for academic challenges**

What academic challenges will students undoubtedly face? Frontload for these. Connections.

Gardner’s multiple entry points, Bloom’s tax, multiple intelligences

**Chapter 9: Planning for social success** talking chairs, students as communicators

Social learning theory  
 playground partners,

**Chapter 10: Planning for social challenges**

‘mis’behavior vs. ‘my’behavior ownership counts  
 What social challenges will students undoubtedly face? Frontload for these.  
 Remember to teach students to be successful.  
 meaningful classroom jobs

**Chapter 11: Planning for Useful Assessment**

Differentiating assessment

Plan meaningful assessment to learn what students understand and have learned AND use the assessment data for future lesson planning

**Chapter 12: Planning for Our Future**

It’s all political, isn’t it?

**Pic:** [http://nib.penandco.com/images/histoire/or/pierre%20de%20touche%202.jpg](http://nib.penandco.com/images/histoire/or/pierre%20de%20touche%202.jpg#) Picture to use as a sidebar in text to bullet touchstones for each chapter’s main points.

A little about me…

In some ways, I’m much like other general elementary educators. I was taught in a school where general and special education students learned in separate classrooms. I played on playgrounds with other children who were much like me. I grew up with very little interaction with children with disabilities. I dreamed of being a teacher for as long as I can remember. I went to a large state college and took classes about how to teach general education students; none of my formal teacher preparation was in the area of special education. My student teaching experiences were in classrooms with students without identified disabilities. I began my teaching career in a school that separated students with and without disabilities.

In other ways, I’m quite different than other general elementary educators. I … started teaching students with disabilities in elementary classrooms nearly twenty years ago.

References

Fisher, D., Frey, N. & Thousand, J. (2003). What do special educators need to know and be prepared to do for inclusive schooling to work? Teacher Education and Special Education. 26(1), 42-50.

Hammersley, M. (2007). Educational Research and Evidence-based Practice. London: Sage Publications

National Center on Disability (2000). Back to school on civil rights: Advancing the federal commitment to Leave No Child Behind.

National Center for Educational Statistics (2007). Indicator 31, Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2007/section4/indicator31.asp).