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JESUS, JUSTICE, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION INCLUSION: A CASE FOR THE "SHALOM MODEL OF INCLUSION"

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A CASE FOR THE "SHALOM *MODEL OF INCLUSION*"
BY BEN NWORIE

Abstract

This paper is a theoretical discourse that proposes a justice-infused, biblically based special education inclusion model, the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion." After discussing justice, inclusion, incarnationality, the Hebrew concept of *shalom,* and *agape* love which form the foundational thinking for the proposed "Shalom Model of Inclusion," the author introduces the central concept of *Imago Dei* and the four domains of the "Shalom Model of Inclusion" which are: shared curriculum experience, shared strengths and needs, effective and differentiated pedagogy, as well as community and collaborative praxis. The model is illustrated with the love, compassion and collaboration shared in the L'Arche communities where disabilities, instead of being viewed negatively as problems to be solved, are viewed as gifts, and opportunities to learn new ways to love, to be faithful, to live together in recognition of the naturalness and goodness of difference, as well as discover the importance of weakness and vulnerability. L'Arche tangibly demonstrates the practicality and effectiveness of *shalom* inclusion.

Keywords: justice, inclusion, special education, love, shalom.

Introduction

If the practice of special education inclusion continues based on best practices as we know it, that is, our best human ideology, knowledge, and skills, etc., it will bring about *some* beneficial outcomes. However, even though we will see *minor* benefits, we will continue to get exactly what we have been getting—that is, lower educational outcomes in comparison with general education (Bremer, Albus, & Thurlow, 2011), litigations (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013; Pudelski, 2013; Yell, 2012), teacher attrition (Mamlin, 2012), lack of love and justice from the Christian perspective (1 Corinthians 13: 2-3, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 5: 19), and lack of human flourishing. On the other hand, if we conduct special education inclusion based on best practices of the finest human ideology, knowledge, and skills, in combination with Jesus' model of love and justice as demonstrated existentially and pedagogically by him, then we will realize a system of special education inclusion that is wholesome, biblically based, and characteristic of *shalom.*

The proposed "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" will be characterized by positive and measurable educational outcomes; less litigation; and more thriving practitioners, who teach not only out of a sense of obligation, but out of a sense of vocational calling to *shalom.* The proposed "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" will also be characterized by flourishing students who experience love, justice, and *shalom* demonstrated by their teachers, and service providers.

This paper is a proposal for a paradigm shift in the practice of special education inclusion. The basic idea of inclusive special education, as it is currently understood in schools, is the practice of educating children with and without disabilities in the same setting, which is usually understood to be the general education setting (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2015; Salend, 2011). Some essential components of the proposed "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion," which are often missing in the traditional setting include acceptance (which encompasses the biblical concept of justice), innovative curriculum design, belonging (which incorporates the biblical idea of love), and community (Gargiulo, 2015; Salend, 2016).

This paper is a theoretical discourse that proposes a move from current conventional special education models of inclusion, to a more dynamic, incarnational and biblically based special education inclusion model, the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion." After discussing justice and inclusion, the concept of incarnationality, the Hebrew concept of *shalom,* and the concept of *agape* love, which form the foundational thinking for the proposed model, the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion," will be introduced. Following this foundational discussion, the four domains of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion"—shared curriculum experience, shared strengths and needs, effective and differentiated pedagogy, and community and collaborative praxis—will be examined, along with the central concept of *Imago Dei*.

The "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" is illustrated with the love, compassion and collaboration shared in the L'Arche communities where disabilities, instead of being viewed negatively as problems to be solved, are viewed as gifts, and opportunities to learn new ways to love, to be

faithful, to live together in recognition of the naturalness and goodness of difference, as well as discover the importance of weakness and vulnerability. L'Arche tangibly demonstrates the practicality and effectiveness of *shalom* inclusion.

Foundational Concepts

"The *Shalom* Model of Inclusion" foundationally encompasses the concepts of justice, inclusion, incarnationality, *shalom,* and *agape* love.

Justice

According to the Oxford Dictionary, justice is to do, treat, or represent with due fairness or appreciation. As a noun, it is the quality of being fair and reasonable (University of Oxford). Justice means giving each person what he or she deserves. It is something everyone seems to desire for themselves. Here is a good illustration of the meaning of justice. Heather and Mark were living comfortable, safe lives, yet they became concerned about the most vulnerable, poor, and marginalized members of society, and they made long term personal sacrifices in order to serve the interests, needs and cause of those other people. That according to the Bible is what it means to "do justice" (Keller, 2010).

Justice *(mishpat)* in the Old Testament combines the abilities both to judge and to acquit which emanate from God (Doty, 2011). In other words, justice in the Old Testament illustrates the idea of the juxtaposition of God's Law against God's love. By abiding in love, we allow the justice (*mishpat*) of God to prevail in our lives (Doty, 2011). As the Bible clearly teaches, *"The one who abides in love, abides in God and God abides in him"* (1 John 4:16b).

Inclusion

Most dictionaries define inclusion as being really and truly an insider. In the educational context, it is being actively and essentially a part of the regular education curriculum. It refers to educating students with disabilities in general education settings (Gargiulo, 2015; Heward, 2013; Salend, 2011). Inclusive education is to create a fair, collaborative, supportive, and nurturing learning environment for all students.

The federal law that regulates special education practice in the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandates the education of every child with a disability in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which means educating them in settings as close to the regular class as possible where an appropriate program can be provided, and where the child can make satisfactory educational progress (Heward, 2013).

Although the concept of inclusion grew out of mainstreaming and shares many of its philosophical goals and implementation strategies, inclusion is different from mainstreaming. In Mainstreaming, a special needs student is temporarily placed in a general education classroom for content instruction at a time that the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team thinks that the student will be successful. Students in mainstream placements are "pulled out"

for services or for direct instruction in a more restrictive special education classroom. In full inclusion, on the other hand, a special needs child is placed in a general education classroom 100% of his/her day. The student's services and service providers all go to that classroom to assist the student in being successful. Inclusion in this full sense is not right for every student. The decision for a full or partial inclusion placement rests with the student's IEP team. For maximum benefit, inclusion must, therefore, be decided on an individualized basis (Salend, 2016).

Including special education students in the general education population has obvious benefits to it. That is why the majority of educators prefer a level of integration of students with disabilities with nondisabled students (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2015). There seem to be no detrimental effects or significant loss of instructional time due to the presence of a student with severe disability (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Gargiulo, 2015). On the contrary, inclusive programs tend to yield increased accomplishment of IEP objectives, in the same way that increased academic improvement tends to result from heterogeneous grouping of students rather than from grouping by ability level (Gargiulo, 2015; Nworie, 2013). In addition, in full inclusion, student's instruction time is better utilized as they stay in one classroom for services (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007).

The special education student often wants to emulate what the general education student is doing. When the general education student helps the special education student in a learning process it often increases the general education student's learning skills and knowledge base. Students learn to work with students who are different from what they see around them normally. Many students are willing to help accomplish social integration goals. When a general education student becomes a friend with a special education student they often become the special education student's biggest champions (Salend, 2016).

Special education students who are educated in inclusive regular education classrooms have more opportunities for "normal" relationships with their peers and to learn the normal cultural patterns (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007). Special education students learn to work together, develop friendships, collaborative skills, communicative, and interactive skills as they collaborate with their regular education peers in inclusion settings. Conversely the regular education students develop tolerance and appreciation of differences when they work with their special education peers through inclusion practices (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Salend, 2011).

Special education students taught in a self-contained special education classroom tend to have lower self-esteem and tend to be employed less than their counterparts in the regular education classroom (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Gargiulo, 2015; Salend, 2016). Since the special education teacher's job is to prepare students for the work world, this sounds like a sad commentary on self-contained, non-inclusive special education classrooms.

Shalom (as will be defined in the next section) happens when special education inclusion is done right. For example, Klingner and Vaughn (1999) investigated the perceptions of 4,659 students and found that students with disabilities want the same activities, books, homework, grading criteria, and grouping practices as their classmates without disabilities. The study also found that students with and without disabilities in inclusion setting value teachers who "slow down instructions when needed, explain concepts and assignments clearly, teach learning strategies, and teach the same material in different ways so that everyone can learn" (p. 23).

Incarnationality

The noun *incarnation* comes from two Latin roots, namely *in*, meaning "into", and *carn*, meaning "flesh". The Latin and the Greek equivalent (*en sarki*) of the word incarnation literally means "in-flesh". Though the word *incarnation* is not used in the Bible, it is used in certain references in the New Testament about the person and work of Jesus Christ "in the flesh" (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 1: 22; Packer, 1996). Incarnation is the theological term for the coming of Jesus, the idea that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5: 19). *Incarnation* is used figuratively to convey the idea of putting an abstract concept or idea into concrete form (Neal, 2006). The "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" proposed is *incarnational* because it illustrates the idea of inclusion as concrete, ongoing tangible acts of love through the teacher and the community members towards the special needs student (Billings, 2012).

Shalom

The Hebrew word *Shalom* (שָׁלוֹם), generally translated in English as peace, has a much broader and deeper meaning and application than peace. Shalom (שָׁלוֹם) in Hebrew means completeness, soundness, wholeness, welfare, and peace. It is from *shalom* which encompasses the meaning of safety, wellness, happiness, restored, good health, and prosperity (Strong's Concordance, no date). *Shalom* is used in the Bible for salvation, justice, and peace (Yoder, 1998). The Old Testament usage of Shalom has these three shades of meaning: "A material and physical state of being, relationships, and a moral sense of duty" (DomNwachukwu & Lee 2014, p. 98). As a material and physical state, shalom seeks harmony for peoples' physical and material well-being. A biblical example of this is seen in Genesis 37:14 when Jacob asked his son Joseph to go to his brothers and check on their *shalom* (or well-being). So a *state of shalom* ensures good physical health as well as the absence of deprivations. A state of *shalom* is what we desire for our special needs students.

In the Old Testament, another idea of this multifaceted concept, *shalom,* is illustrated in relationships that embody personal harmony with others, and harmony with God, as illustrated in the life and relationships of Abraham, especially in his relationship with Lot (Genesis 13:8). *Shalom*, in this sense of harmonious relationships, is also seen in Leviticus 19:18 "You shall not

take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD." Here the justice that is in view is that of a holistic and communal state of well-being, peace, love, good health, and prosperity (Crisp, 2014; Fowler & Pacino, 2012). *Shalom,* as harmonious community state, is characterized by unity and obvious equality. *Shalom*, therefore, is accomplished when we go beyond mere tolerance, and delight to "live in right relationship with God, each other, and nature" (DomNwachukwu & Lee, 2014, p. 112). This state of shalom is greatly needed in special education.

In the Old Testament, *shalom* is also "the presence of moral and ethical relationships characterized by honesty, integrity, and straightforward character; it is the absence of deceit, lies, and hypocrisy" (DomNwachukwu & Lee, 2014, p. 98). These qualities of *shalom* such as completeness, wholeness, welfare, peace, physical and material well-being, communal harmony, honesty, integrity, and straightforward character, are embodied by God, and their potentialities are built into humans who are made in His image. In Genesis 1: 26 the triune God said, "Let us (*Elohim,* plural) make man in our image." Since man and woman are made in the image of God who embodies these qualities of *shalom*, it should be within the repertoire of human beings to exhibit, share, practice and experience *shalom*. The idea of the image of God (*Imago Dei*) within humankind supports and sustains the possibility of a lived experience of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" in special education. Wherever *shalom* is experienced, there is always present a God kind of love called *agape*.

Agape Love

The Bible describes the love that motivated Jesus' ministry as the first and greatest commandment: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22: 34-40). It is the exceptional God kind of love called *agape*. "It is the love that is used of God for man . . . based on the fact of a solid, unwavering love commitment. . . . This *agape* love is the kind of love that chooses to understand the needs of another and then responds to those needs by expending available resources to meet those needs (Stowell, 1997, p. 182). Agape and justice are integral and essential components of *shalom*. Where the two are lacking it will be difficult to find shalom. Conversely, where the two converge, as is the case in the life and ministry of Jesus, *shalom* is present. *Agape* love in the proposed "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" for special education, is based both on God's Word and on the words and ways of Jesus (his love and justice).

The Shalom Model of Inclusion

The L'Arche experience outside the classroom (described below) is proof positive that the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" can be actualized in the school setting. The "*Shalom* Model of

Inclusion" has in its center the concept of *Imago Dei.* That is, that humankind is created in the image of God, with all the potentialities of *shalom* living. Yes, we actually have this capacity to live incarnationally, to love with agape love, and to create communities characterized by *shalom* and inclusiveness. Built around this concept of *Imago Dei* are four domains: shared curriculum experience, shared strengths and needs, reflective and differentiated pedagogy, and community and collaborative praxis.
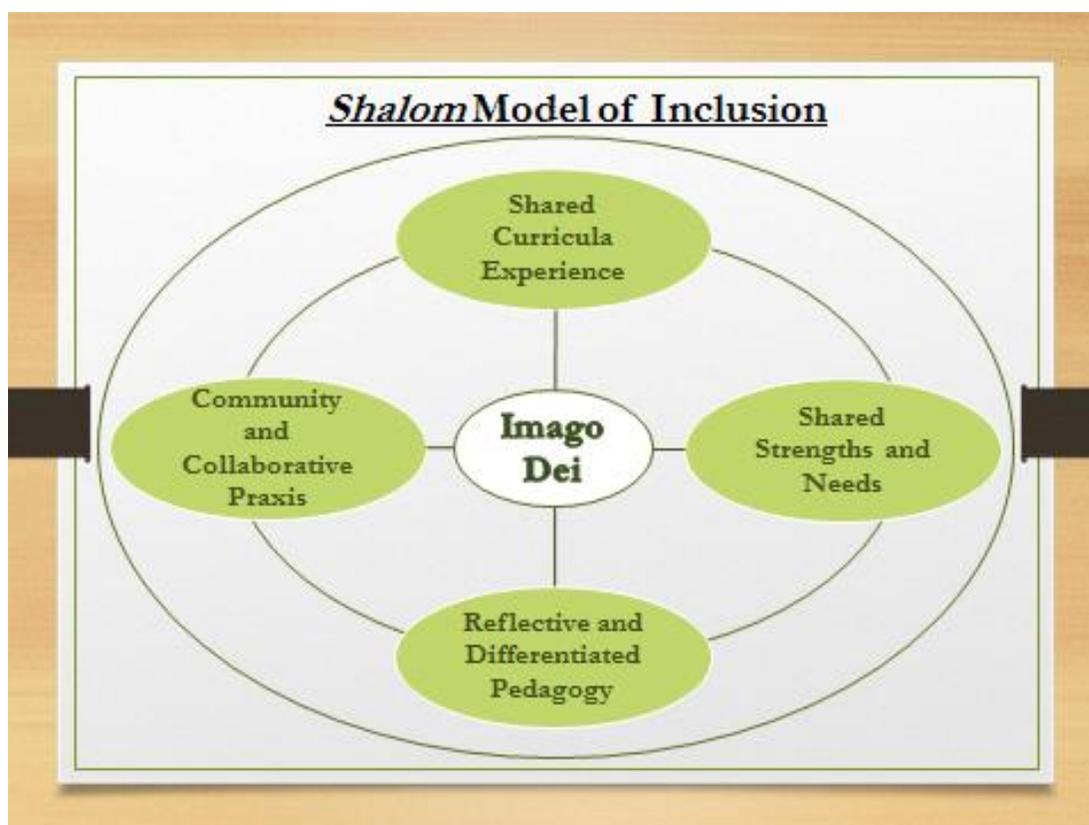

Figure 1.1: The "Shalom Model of Inclusion"

Imago Dei

The "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" for special education is founded primarily on the realization that human beings are created in God's image (*Imago Dei*). What does it mean to be created or made in the "image of God"? Genesis 1:26-28 states: Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

"Made in the image of God," (verse 27), means that humans are a snapshot or facsimile of God. That is, we are godlike and have godlike aptitudes (Staub, 2010). Humans have great value, and occupy a higher place in the created order than animals and plants because we alone are imprinted with godlike characteristics. Humans, though finite and imperfect share the same attributes with God the Creator who is infinite and perfect. We bear the image of God and are godlike because we share attributes of God (Staub, 2010). We reflect God's creative, spiritual, intelligent, communicative, relational, moral, and purposeful capacities.

The image of God we bear impacts our relationship with God as well as our relationship with fellow human beings. It is God's desire that humans enjoy fellowship with Him as well as with each other. Just as the image of God is reflected in and through all people regardless of their needs, status, culture, or gender, the image of God we bear makes people of all races and ethnic groups of the same status and unique value before God. This *Imago Dei* concept negates the idea of social or racial superiority or inferiority, segregation, divisions, or separations. The fact that the entire human race shares common origins as well as this common bond of divine identity should produce a concern and empathy for all people (Lee, 2014).

The image of God is, therefore, the core, uniting piece of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" for special education. *Imago Dei*, the central piece, ties together, supports and strengthens the four essential components of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion". The four components are: (1) shared curricular experience, (2) shared strengths and needs, (3) reflective and differentiated pedagogy, and (4) community and collaborative praxis. Below is a brief explanation of each component.

Shared Curricular Experience

An inclusive special education environment is where all students are learners and are provided with fairness instead of identicalness, through being educated together in high-quality, age-appropriate, general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools (Salend, 2016; Gargiulo, 2015). Such inclusivity is essential for a *shalom*-based educational environment. Before the enactment of the federal legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, people with disabilities in the USA faced all kinds of barriers (Nworie, 2013; Yell, 2016), including access to school, access to basic services, inclusion in regular classrooms, and so forth.

In his ministry, Jesus exemplified this aspect of *shalom* in various ways. He gave His hearers the shared curricular experience by teaching the different ability groups together, by teaching his disciples and answering their questions together, by teaching the people publicly in the synagogue, by openly teaching while answering the questions of his Jewish opponents, and while associating with several classes of people (e.g., Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 -7; Luke 4: 14-30; Mark 6: 2; Matthew 13: 54, etc.). Jesus also exemplified the shared curricular experience component of *shalom* when he took his disciples with him and taught them while

he ate with and spent time talking with those who were despised. Keller (2010) put it most eloquently this way: "He ate with and spoke to tax collectors, the wealthiest people in society, yet the most hated, since they acquired their gains through collaborating with the Roman forces of occupation (Keller, 2010, p 45). Jesus welcomed all into His presence, without being a respecter of persons, and provided simultaneous lessons for people of all different walks of life (Matthew 26: 6-13; Mark 14: 3-9; Luke 5: 27-32; Luke 7: 44-46; Luke 19: 1-10).

Shared Strengths and Needs

A *shalom*-based, inclusive special education calls for a community where *all students* are valued as worthwhile individuals who have strengths and needs, are capable of learning and contributing to society. It is a situation where *all students* are taught to appreciate diversity and to value and learn from each other's similarities and differences.

This *shalom*-based, inclusive special education model, where all students are taught to love, value and learn from the similarities and differences of their peers, can best be illustrated by the worldviews and way of life of the L'Arche communities. L'Arche was founded in 1964 by Jean Vanier and Father Thomas Philippe based on Jesus' teaching that the person who is poor in what the world commonly values is, actually, blessed and endowed with deep gifts to offer. The L'Arche communities are "an international network of inclusive communities within which people with developmental disabilities live together with people who do not have such disabilities" (Swinton, 2003 p. 68).

There is a radically new system of valuing in L'Arche. It is a place where disabilities exist, but they do not really matter. In other words, within L'Arche, disability has a totally different meaning from the cultural norm. The worldview and theology of L'Arche is such that "disabilities are not viewed as problems to be solved, but rather as particular ways of being human which need to be understood, valued, and supported" (Swinton, 2003, p. 68). According to Swinton (2003), the emphasis is on "discovering ways of loving and living together that recognize the naturalness and beauty of difference and the theological significance of weakness and vulnerability" (p. 68).

The act of loving, welcoming and accepting has such a central place at L'Arche that "within the L'Arche communities people with developmental disabilities are accepted and welcomed not for what they can or cannot do, but simply for what they are" (p. 68). At L'Arche all people are welcomed with thankfulness and love as "*gifts* which have divine dignity, meaning and purpose… not for what (the *gift*) might become or for what it is not" (pp 68-69). Swinton (2003) further adds "offering care and support to people with profound developmental disabilities is thus not an act of charity, but rather it is an act of faithfulness within which people respond in love to those whom God has given to them" (p. 69). This practice of offering care and support to people with special needs as an act of faithful, loving response that is experienced at L'Arche foreshadows what the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" portends inside of the classroom.

As we have just discussed, in the L'Arche community, all people are welcomed with thankfulness and love as divine gifts that have marvelous dignity, meaning and purpose. One person is not valued above another; all persons are valued for their personhood, their *Imago Dei*. All persons have strengths to contribute to the community and all persons have needs that can be met by others in the community. This is the type of shalom-based inclusiveness that embraces each member with agape love and demonstrates the incarnational capacity of loving the different other.

This quality of love carries with it the kind of compassion that Jesus profusely demonstrated in the course of his earthly ministry (Luke 7:13; Matthew 8:3, 16-17; 9:36; 14:14; 15:32). As Berkowicz and Myers (2014) have rightly stressed, for effective learning, compassion is indispensable. They have also very correctly pointed out that schools with compassionate leaders increase their students' potential for academic success. It is not an overstatement that compassionate learning environments, by helping decrease stress levels, do lower students' cortisol levels thereby increasing their ability to learn (Berkowicz & Myers, 2014; Nworie, 2006).

Reflective and Differentiated Pedagogy

In the *Shalom* inclusive practices environment, there is instructional integrity and integration. According to Friend and Bursuck (2015), instructional integration which has integrity is practiced by "adjusting how teaching and learning are designed, (delivered) and measured" (p. 18). Instructional integration is also ensuring all students are afforded the services and the accommodations needed to succeed. That is, individualized education and differentiated instruction for *all students* is extended in terms of assessment techniques, general education curriculum accessibility, teaching strategies, technology, universal and physical design, accommodations, modifications, classroom management techniques, and a wide array of resources and related services based on their needs (Friend & Bursuck, 2015; Salend, 2011). In his ministry, Jesus exemplified this aspect of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" as he utilized various pedagogical skills and techniques. For example, he utilized questioning, storytelling, miracles, and parables at different times in his teaching ministry, depending on the needs of the listeners.

Disabilities can present real handicapping conditions for special education students. Consequently, effective inclusive practices require that students with special needs be provided with appropriate aids, supports and services that can help level the playing field for them and enable these students to transition to independence, to flourishing, and to *shalom*. Some of the necessary aids, supports and services include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language therapy, audiology services, psychological services, assistive technology, medical and school health services, and others. Without the provision of these needed supports and services, the academic and occupational outcomes for most of these students will continue to lag behind those of their peers without disabilities (Friend & Bursuck,

2015; Gargiulo, 2015; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2015).

The good news is that with advances today in modern science and technology, it is very possible to live a full and satisfying life with a disability. The sad commentary, however, is that for a number of reasons, many students with special needs are not getting the aids, supports and services (including assistive technology and the kinds of instructional services) that they actually need. According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (2015), "the reason for this is not known, but perhaps has to do with limited time, training, or support for general education teachers; or because of teacher reluctance to implement strategies perceived to be of particular utility for only a small number of students in the class." (p. 31).

Community and Collaborative Praxis

The *shalom* inclusive practices environment needs and invites parents, pupils, school personnel, other professionals and service providers to pull together as partners for best outcomes. Generally, parents prefer that their children be educated in the general education classrooms along with their peers in those settings (Friend & Bursuck, 2015). This kind of preference by parents is based on the perception that their children perform better academically in inclusive settings. Overall, more positive academic outcomes have been found in inclusive schools. For example, as correctly reported by Friend and Bursuck (2015), research findings from a statewide study showed that students with disabilities who spent more time in general education had a higher passing rate in the eight-grade state test than similar students with disabilities who were educated in special education settings. Friend and Bursuck (2015) also reported other research findings which demonstrate that inclusive practices make positive impacts on students' achievement in math, problem solving skills, and discipline referrals. When parents participate in collaborative decision-making regarding the educational services of their children, those parents tend to be more positive (Friend & Bursuck, 2015). Such positive partnerships and social integration between parents, teachers, other professionals, students with disabilities and their peers, contribute to *shalom* experience and flourishing for students. *Shalom* inclusion thrives in collaborative, supportive, and nurturing learning environments (Friend & Bursuck, 2015; Salend, 2016).

Pupils who are involved and participate actively in their schooling enjoy the benefits of inclusion, and show more positive learning outcomes (Greenwood, 2015; Salend, 2016). All students should be encouraged to attend their IEP meetings (if they are able to attend). Students in 9th grade or who are 14 years should always be invited to their IEP, and should be encouraged to show full school participation, and fully attend their other school meetings such as the parent-teacher meetings if they possibly can.

Inclusion is more effective when schools and school districts intentionally plan for it. For example, by providing professional development, program-enhancing or restructuring resources and materials, administrative, financial and other needed support, which enable

school personnel, other professionals, service providers and other stake holders to work collaboratively and reflectively in addressing students' strengths and challenges (Salend, 2016).

The ministry of Jesus portrayed real community and collaborative engagement. He reached out to and involved a cross section of his community. For example, Jesus ministry was inclusive of the Samaritans (a hated and despised group by the Jews). He collaborated with a Samaritan woman in witnessing (John 4). One of his most profound teachings was about a "Good Samaritan." As Keller (2010) noted, "the first witnesses to Jesus's birth were shepherds, a despised group considered unreliable, yet God revealed the birth of his Son first to them. The first witnesses of Jesus's resurrection were women, another class of people so marginalized that their testimony was not admissible evidence in court. Yet Jesus revealed himself to them first" (Keller, 2010, p. 45). Hence, Jesus modeled and included members of the community from all classes and walks in life. These *shalom* inclusive practices by Jesus enhanced his teaching and evangelistic ministry and ensured *shalom*. Such inclusiveness, peace, harmony, love and justice define full *shalom* (Fowler & Pacino, 2012; McColl & Ascough, 2009).

Conclusion

The proposed "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" for special education, which combines best practices of finest human ideology, knowledge, and skills*,* with the biblically based principles of love and justice, is an ideal approach to ensure flourishing students, successful practitioners, and thriving communities with positive educational outcomes, and transformational benefits characteristic of *shalom.* At the core of the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" is the concept that humankind is created in the image of God, with the full capacity to live incarnationally, to love with agape love. Surrounding this concept of *Imago Dei* are the four important domains of shared curriculum experience, shared strengths and needs, reflective and differentiated pedagogy, as well as community and collaborative praxis. The successful combination of these components, in concert with loving service and justice, results in communities characterized by wholesome inclusiveness (or *shalom*).

The experience of the L'Arche community where care and support are offered to people with special needs, not as an act of benevolence, but as an act of faithful, loving response was portrayed as concrete evidence that the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" can be actualized in the school setting. The importance of compassion, which pervaded Jesus' earthly ministry, is highlighted in connection with the experience of the L'Arche communities where love and compassion go together resulting in *shalom*. It was, pointed out in the paper that compassion is indispensable for lowering student stress, and improving school success outcomes.

There are negative consequences of the disregard of this biblically based incarnational model of inclusion, a model which unites the best of Christian virtues and ethical norms with the best of educational principles and practices. The failure of special education professionals and other stakeholders to abide by the bedrock ethical principles of justice and inclusion, as well as

incarnationality, and the foundational moral virtue of love (*agape*), has the potential to lead to a continued decline in the quality of educational performance, rise in litigations, rise in teacher attrition, lack of student flourishing, and lack of teacher thriving which is not in the best interest of the future of society.

Conversely, infusing best practices with the "*Shalom* Model of Inclusion" which includes the biblical and ethical principles of justice, inclusion, incarnationality, compassion, and love (*agape)* through the work of the Spirit, creates the *shalom* community that portends the flourishing of students with disabilities, and the thriving of practitioners, while affirming the value and contribution of every child and teacher, all who have been created with *Imago Dei* capacities.

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