

Challenging Normalcy Project: Professional Book Study

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Introduction

The purpose of this book study is to provide background knowledge and information about inclusion, disability studies, laws, and challenging the norm. Providing spaces for thinking and discussing experiences and views to move towards inclusion and acceptance in the classroom, we (faculty, classroom aids, and administration) participate in a book study of *Rethinking Disability* (2019) with a focus on chapters one, two and three. These chapters outline the basics of what teachers need to know in today's classroom. Educators can learn the history and purpose of inclusive education. (Kluth, 2010)

Discussion questions for each chapter allows folks to share thoughts and questions in a Jamboard with an in person whole group discussion. Small groups can include an advocate for inclusive education. Focus on the assets students bring to the classroom, the contribution of all students to the collective community, and how that can increase understanding and include asset based language. The long term goal can be to continue to read the whole book and have a well informed, skilled and inclusive staff and faculty. (Valle & Connor, 2019)

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Profession Book Study Guide

Book: *Rethinking Disability, A Disability Studies Approach to Inclusive Practices* second edition

By Jan Valle and David Connor

- ❖ Chapter : Making Sense of Public School Culture and Context
- ❖ Chapter 2: Contemplating the In)visibility of Disability
- ❖ Chapter 3: Examining Beliefs and Expanding Notions of Normalcy

Methods

Consider inviting all staff to participate. Explain that participants will read the first three chapters of *Rethinking Disability* (2019) in grade level groups. The purpose of these chapters is to gain background knowledge and understanding to guide and enrich classroom practices. It would be paced at one chapter per four to six weeks. The groups will meet and use discussion questions during professional learning community meetings. Before the first meeting and before reading *Rethinking Disability* (2019) consider inviting a speaker, a former student of the school to share their story of their time at the school and their educational experiences since. This speaker will focus on challenges within the education system. (Valle & Connor, 2019)

Chapter 1 - Making Sense of Public School Culture and Context

The purpose of reading chapter 1 is to understand and comprehend the purpose and goals of public education and apply it to how these trends and policies affect Catholic education today. All those that are reading will be asked to focus on any information that can be most helpful for our specific school community. (Valle & Connor, 2019)

❖ Goal

- Reflect on Chapter 1 and the speaker's experience to examine and understand the challenges of the public school system and specifically disability. Participants are asked to also reflect on how these topics are translated to the private school community and their own teaching practices.

❖ Before meeting in small groups (approximately 4 weeks to read and reflect) ➤ All participants will read Chapter 1 and reflect on the following questions ■ What is your definition of the purpose of education? How would it be different in a religious private school setting?

■ What does belonging look like in this school: students, parents, staff/faculty.

Describe what this looks like for each group and how to align with our school's mission and purpose.

■ What are some of the differences between public schools vs private schools? How does this affect the types of families that are attending our school?

❖ In small group discussion (approximately 45 mins)

- The leader will welcome all to the meeting and ask first for someone to volunteer to post on the [Jamboard](#) where each group can make a board full of their thoughts,

ideas, pictures and resources for all to have access to.

- Then will open the floor up for any first thoughts and reflections
- For Catholic Schools, - Consider providing a summary and timeline of the history of Catholic Education and its foundation in the US, based on the *The Cambridge Companion to American Catholicism* chapters 1-3. Discuss how Catholic dedication has developed and what this means for educators. Each group can complete a 3-2-1 reflection and have three things they have learned today, two things they want to learn more about and one question to further the discussion about this topic.

❖ Reflection

- Each participant will be encouraged to have their own journal or place to write and reflect on their experiences with the readings or be provided with paper to record their final thoughts and feelings.
- It is also asked that each participant complete a [google form](#) for feedback and to gauge everyone's comfort and knowledge level.

Chapter 2 - Contemplating the (In)visiblity of Disability

The purpose of reading chapter 2 is to identify the history of disability within schools and how disability rights have affected the educational landscape and the development of inclusion and equity. With an understanding of what schools must provide (and what students and families are leaving behind when they choose a private school over the services in a public school), we aim to dive deeper into our experiences, exploring opportunities for growth in public and private school environments. (Valle & Connor, 2019)

- ❖ Goal: Reflect on Chapter 2 and to comprehend the history of special education, disability rights and how all of this affected the public school system and the private sector..

- ❖ Before meeting in small groups (approximately 4 weeks to read and reflect). All participants will read Chapter 2 and reflect on the following questions:

- What was something that really stood out to you while reading about disability history? Anything you did not already know? Any sources or resources to add?

- From your own school experiences do you remember students with disabilities being included in the general education classroom? What about in the classroom you have worked in? Has anything changed?

- If private schools were mandated/legally obligated to provide the same services that public schools were, how would that change the culture of the school or the nature of your job?

- ❖ In small group discussion (approximately 45 minutes)

- Welcome all to the meeting and ask first for someone to volunteer to post on the

[Jamboard](#) where all can post their thoughts, ideas, pictures and resources for all to have access. Then, open the floor up for any first thoughts and reflections

- The focus of the discussion will be related to the article *Special Education in Private School: 6 Things to Know*. (2021). This article outlines the services provided by public schools while attending a private school. What parts of this process make sense and which parts could be confusing. How can we as educators support parents, students and other teachers in this assessment process?
- Each group will complete a notice and wonder reflection. Each group will choose three ideas they noticed that stood out to them and two wonderings about idea that one might want to research more.

❖ In Whole group discussion (approximately 30 minutes)

- Each group will share one notice and one wonder reflections and have a whole group discussion with the focus on the relationship between public and private schools and the educational testing, support and accommodations for students with disabilities.

❖ Reflection

- Encourage participants to have their own journal to write and reflect on their experiences with the readings to record their final thoughts and feelings.
- It is also asked that each participant complete a [google form](#) for feedback and to gauge everyone's comfort and knowledge level.

Chapter 3 - Expanding Beliefs and Expanding Notions of Normalcy

The purpose of reading chapter 3 is to understand how disabilities are seen and how these

attitudes have developed over time. Encountering the first hand experiences of those with disabilities can affect one's understanding and expectations of students with disabilities and an understanding of how the medical model might affect one's reaction to a first person narrative. Looking toward this myth of average or normal can we as educators find a place where all students can learn and thrive. (Valle & Connor, 2019)

❖ Goal

➤ Reflect on Chapter 3 and comprehend the development of inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom. Taking the time to understand the roles of the medical model and the myth of average or normal to create classrooms for all different kinds of students,

❖ Before meeting in small groups (approximately 4 weeks to read and reflect) ➤ All participants will read Chapter 3 and reflect on the following questions ■ How has the medical model of disability affected your view of students with a disability?

■ Go through your class list, choose 5 students at random and identify 3 assets that each student brings to your classroom. How can this positive frame change how you approach your classroom of students?

■ After watching *The Myth of Average: Todd Rose*

<https://youtu.be/4eBmyttcfU4>. How can normalcy and average be at odds with diversity and inclusion?

❖ In small group discussion (approximately 45 mins)

➤ Welcome all to the meeting and ask first for someone to volunteer to post on the [Jamboard](#) where each group can share their thoughts, ideas, pictures and

resources for all to have access to. Then open the floor up for any first thoughts and reflections.

➤ The focus of the discussion will be related to how this chapter is focused on narratives and first person perspectives of disability. How can this affect our view of “average” from the video? Each group will come up with three ways to connect these readings to their lives and two ideas they would like to know more about.

❖ In Whole group discussion (30 minutes)

➤ Each group will share one of the ways the reading connected to their life and one idea they would want to know more about. With these reflections the whole group will discuss this topic of normalcy and average with a focus on how to meet all students needs.

❖ Reflection

➤ Each participant will be encouraged to have their own journal or place to write and reflect on their experiences with the readings or be provided with paper to record their final thoughts and feelings.

➤ It is also asked that each participant complete a [google form](#) for feedback and to gauge everyone's comfort and knowledge level.

References

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