

# Nelson mandela: leadership skills



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Nelson Mandela has been one of the best examples of what a leader is. If I were to describe Mandela in one word, I would say that he was, in everything that he did, a fighter. Throughout his life, he fought a lot of battles to bring freedom to his people in South Africa against the apartheid government. Mandela was born, and grew up, in the Xhosa society in Transkei. It was during his childhood when he first saw the troubles of his country like land deprivation and racism (Limb, 2008). At his time white settlers controlled and owned most of the land in South Africa. Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC), an underground political movement, in 1942 and became one of the youth leaders in the organization (Boehmer, 2010). In 1948, the National Party implemented the apartheid government, wherein races were forcibly segregated (Boehmer, 2010). At that time, Africans (or the black people) were obliged to bring a passbook with them all the time, which has all of their identification. They were not allowed to participate in the elections and were forced to live in places away from the white (Magoon, 2008). In short, they were forced to be the underprivileged ones and suffer inequality in their own native land.

Mandela believed in fighting for freedom through non-violent ways. However, he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964 (Limb, 2008). Nevertheless, even in prison, he became the beacon of hope for the people who continued to fight for freedom. When he was released from prison after 27 years, he told his people in his speech that he was disappointed by the troubles of urban black life. He was against those who were harassing innocent people and burning vehicles, pretending to be freedom fighters. He said, “ Freedom without civility, freedom without the ability to live in peace,

was not true freedom at all” (Mandela, 1994). South Africa had their first multi-racial elections in 1994 and Nelson Mandela won, therefore, becoming the first black president of South Africa.

Mandela’s attitude should serve as an inspiration for a special education administrator. In spite of the trials and problems he faced, he stood his ground, believed in his principles and kept on fighting. As a special education administrator, one will encounter challenges along the way. One has to set standards and policies for special education programs and make sure that these are complied. He will be the one who will fight for the students under the special education program and assure that they get to have all they need in terms of education. It will be a never-ending fight. People will be critical to students with disabilities and they will often be discriminated. However, the special education administrator, as a leader, must be an inspiration and a strong motivator of equality.

With this I end with Mandela’s famous line during one of his trials: “ I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die” (Mandela, 1994, p. 181).

Special education administrators must depend on positive relations with local community agencies and other forms of social support (e. g., homeless shelters, foster care agencies/DHHS) in order to provide integrated transitional services for adolescents with disabilities. As such, special

education administrators must promote, implement, and sustain effective collaborations.

Identify how and with whom you should collaborate as a special education administrator responsible for the promotion of adolescents' with disabilities and their independent living needs and self-determination.

A fight fought by a united front is more successful than a fight fought by one. Just like Mandela in his fight for freedom, he was surrounded with people who he had inspired and continued to fight for their ideals. In special education, the fight for a brighter future for the children is not placed solely on the special education administrator's shoulder. It is a collaboration of people, gathering for a purpose. People usually rely on family and friends for help but sometimes, their supports are limited and there is a need to search for additional help within the community.

For most people, the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority, as the administrator of public mental health aid in Oakland County, links this gap by giving assistance to those who need it (Community Housing Network, n. d.). The OCCMHA is in charge of providing services and support to adults with psychological illness, children with severe emotional disturbances and people with developmental disabilities (Oakland County Michigan, n. d.). The OCCMHA Board checks and assesses Oakland County's mental health needs, regulates public and private services that are required to satisfy those needs, and surveys and recommends the annual budget and implementation of plans (Oakland County Michigan, n. d.). The OCCMHA does not directly provide the services, but it provides funding to a number of different

agencies that provides direct services accessible to those who needs help (Community Housing Network, n. d.). It gives extra support for people with disabilities for them to expand their chances of relating, learning, working, playing and contributing their best to society.

Aside from the OCCMHA, the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center, Inc. (MORC) believes that persons with disabilities are members of the society (MORC, n. d.). The MORC helps the differently-abled and the mentally-challenged to accomplish their dreams and desires. The MORC does an extensive service, education and training, and support. Throughout the years, the MORC has supported many children and adults leave from nursing homes and different institutions and integrate themselves into the community once again (MORC, n. d.). The ideas of Gentle Teaching, founded by John McGee, Ph. D., are being used by MORC since 1986. This teaching is founded on the principles of training the individual to feel safe, to feel loved, to be able to love others, and that it is all right to interact with others (MORC, n. d.).

Another one is the Community Living Services (CLS), which is an organization that encourages individuals with disabilities to participate in the community and learn to live on self-reliance in order to have a more fulfilling life (Community Living, n. d.). The mission of CLS is to help each person practice making decisions for themselves, to help them learn to have and maintain relationships with family and friends, and to help them become full citizens of the community (Community Living, n. d.).

Scenario: your district's special education rule waivers for resource room caseloads are set to expire in 12 months. You are the new Special Education

Director for the district. The Superintendent tells you soon after you were hired that he wants the next round of waivers to be developed behind closed doors, with little or no publicity or involvement from the teaching staff or parents of students with disabilities. He also said that the district needs to save more money from the next round of waivers than the first approved waivers. Should you be concerned about anything? What kind of issues (legal, moral, ethical, practical) can you anticipate ahead in accomplishing this task?"

Certain problem might arise in this situation. The Superintendent has to be really careful what he puts on those waivers because in the end, his name goes on the signature line below the waivers and if something is wrong, he will get in trouble and that will cost his job.

If the waivers are to be developed without the involvement of the teaching staff or parents of the students with disabilities, the school might not get the right resources that can help the students with disabilities with their education. Without sufficient preparation and conceptualization from consultation with the involved parties (the teaching staff and the parents of the students with disabilities), there might be serious complications (Huefner, 1988). According to Huefner (1988), insufficient preparation might lead to the following risks:

Ineffective caseload management

Any local education agency (LEA) would keep on looking for ways to lessen expenses. The first solution would always be to ask the consulting teachers to handle a bigger caseload than what he or she can effectively carry

(Huefner, 1988). In the system of special education, a teacher could usually take on a maximum of fifteen students only for both indirect or consulting and direct or resource services (Lilly, 1977 as cited in Huefner, 1988). If a special educator is doing consulting services only, he or she could handle thirty-five students at most, according to the National Task Force on Teacher Consultation (Idol, 1986 as cited in Huefner, 1988). However, the Teacher Consultation Task Force argues that the number of caseload an educator could carry would be based on his or her experience and collective discernment (Huefner, 1988). Nevertheless, changes in student performance are insignificant with bigger caseloads (Haight, 1984 as cited in Huefner, 1988).

Unreasonable and inaccurate expectations with the effectiveness of the program

Special educators have a habit of jumping from one bandwagon to another. They use what is currently popular and when it does not deliver the intended results, they tend to jump to the next one (Huefner, 1988). They are just adding more problems to a series of problems, which could have been avoided.

Insufficient funds

Wang, Reynolds and Walberg (1986 as cited in Huefner 1988) have proposed the use of experimental waivers to allocate funds for integrated categorical programs. Their proposal could include the allotment of funds for consulting special educators that might risk the children in a regular classroom, whether they are special education students or not (Huefner, 1988). To avoid

consuming all the accessible special education funds on students who are seriously handicapped, regular education should allot a portion of its funds for the fees of carrying out consultation services (Huefner, 1988).

The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), as applied to the school's physical space, technology, and instruction, should insure access to the curriculum for all students. How would you design your school's physical space, technology, and instruction to meet the principles of UDL? Please be sure to address the principles of multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement when you are discussing classroom instruction.

Providing the educational facilities should always be one of the top priorities. These facilities provide an effective and well-organized learning environment that would be a medium for quality education. The design should effectively suit the users of the facility. The environment must be constructed in a way that it contributes to the complete development of the individual mental, physical, and spiritual potentials (Perkins, 1957).

When designing a school building, these considerations must be included:

**Accessibility** – The designer should bear in mind that access must be equally provided to all of the facilities. Ramps should be provided whenever there is a change of level, so people on wheelchairs or crutches will not have a difficulty. Other examples of these are the use of visual and audio signage and tactile strips.

**Aesthetics** – Buildings should be visually appealing and should blend well with the surroundings to foster a sense of belongingness to the community



that it is part of. Exterior and interior spaces should be clearly defined to avoid confusion to the students. Keeping it simple and straight to the point helps in nurturing a sense of place.

Cost-effectiveness – In looking for ways to lessen the construction and maintenance costs, quality of construction should never be sacrificed. Giving up quality over quantity has negative domino effects and would greatly affect the quality education the students deserve.

Functionality – The designers should create a learning environment fit for the students that would help in their learning process and provide them with a quality education.

Productivity – in order for the school building to be productive, it should provide a comfortable and healthy environment in order to support the quality education provided by the school.

Security – Safety would always be the most important factor in designing any building. Factors for safety includes fire protection system and resistance to natural hazards like rain,

Sustainability – It should be taken into consideration when planning for the school building to avoid high cost of construction and maintenance of the building. The use of local and energy-efficient materials should be incorporated into the design of the building.

Community-centered – Create social spaces to promote a sense of community among the students. Social interaction plays an integral part in

maintaining quality education. A student learns in two ways: books and people.

Special education administrators are in a pivotal position for influencing and leading policy initiatives that cross general and special education, at a variety of levels. You have been asked to provide policy recommendations to a foreign government about how to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Based on your research and knowledge of US law and regulation, what would you recommend?

The number of high school dropouts has gradually increased over the years, especially with students with disabilities. The rates when it comes to high school graduation, acceptance to college, and success in career or employment are very low compared to those students without disabilities (National Council on Disability, 2004). The American government has noticed that there was a decline in the quality of education in the country; so in 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed to improve students' academic performances. The law requires schools to gather data on how the students are performing by giving out tests which will be sorted out by race and other aspects like native language and disability (National Council on Disability, 2004). Such legislation will aid a foreign government in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The NCLB helps states and schools prepare their students, as well as those with disabilities, to be able to stand on their own, academically and financially (National Council on Disability, 2004). President George W. Bush signed it into a law in 2002. This act focuses on four basic principles for

education reform: (1) greater accountability for outcomes; (2) adaptability and local control; (3) more options for parents; and (4) gives importance on teaching techniques that works (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2003 as cited in National Council on Disability, 2004).

The NCLB is related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which controls services for students with disabilities and gives individual accountability by using Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that are developed based on the individual student's unique needs (National Council on Disability, 2004). The IDEA protects students with disabilities from discrimination and assures them that they will acquire services that are made to meet their needs in special education (American Youth Policy Forum & Center on Education Policy, 2002 as cited in National Council on Disability, 2004).

The National Center on Educational Outcomes believes that the NCLB complements the provisions of IDEA by giving public accountability to state, district, and school levels for every student with disability (National Council on Disability, 2004). The NCLB, in relation to IDEA, requires students with disabilities to participate in the assessment of states and districts through the tests given (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2003 as cited in National Council on Disability, 2004).

One of the main requirements of IDEA is to allow children with disabilities to be taught in the “least restrictive environment” as much as possible (National Council on Disability, 2004, p. 16). This means that students with disabilities are to be taught in regular or general education classrooms

(National Council on Disability, 2004). The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has garnered support from different organizations and this has proved to be doing well in terms of social and educational aspects (Loiacono & Valenti, 2010).