

Leonard C. Burrello

Creative, visionary, enthusiastic, steadfast, passionate, and generous—these adjectives epitomize the life and work of our treasured colleague, Leonard C. Burrello. The words, “it can’t be done,” are not part of his vocabulary. Simply put, when something will benefit his students, the educational leadership program in the School of Education, Indiana University, or schools nationally, he finds a way to get it done. And he does not waiver in his resolve until it is accomplished.

Leonard was born and spent his formative years in Cleveland, Ohio. He received his B.A. from St. Vincent College, his M.Ed. from Temple University, and his Ed.D. from Syracuse University. During his career he has focused on enhancing the quality of life for special needs learners who too often are marginalized in the educational system and the larger society. After teaching special education in high school in Philadelphia, he served as assistant director of the Westchester County (N.Y.) Board of Cooperative Educational Services for two years. He then began his university career as an assistant professor in the School of Education at the University of Michigan.

In 1976 Leonard joined the Indiana University faculty as an associate professor in the educational leadership unit of the School of Education. While he has taught a range of leadership courses, his primary areas of expertise are special education administration and the change process in education. Promoted to professor 1985, he chaired the educational leadership program twice (1986–1992; 2002–2005), each time energizing and nudging the unit in new, productive directions.

Leonard believes the university must be a place to conceptualize, design, incubate, and institutionalize innovations. Early in his career he championed the position that special education should be viewed as general education, rejecting the notion that special education is some form of alternative education. With federal funding he spread the use of his “inclusion” model by creating the National In-service Network in 1977. Leonard was an early adapter of technology; in the 1980s his research group developed spreadsheet and database algorithms to systematize inclusion of special education students into the regular education curriculum. This has had an enduring impact on all Indiana schools.

Leonard eschews linear thinking. His forte is designing strategies to achieve what most would consider unattainable goals. Thanks in large part to his guidance and persistence, he helped obtain support from the Danforth Foundation to redesign the educational leadership doctoral program. He is proudest of building the faculty that can deliver this distinctive, reconceptualized program. Today, IU’s educational leadership program is ranked consistently among the top 10 in the country.

Since 1985 he has co-directed the University Council for Educational Administration’s Program Center on Preparation and Field Practices in Special Education. In addition, he directed Indiana’s LEAD (Leadership for Educational Administration) project from 1987 to 1994. In 1989 he helped establish the Indiana School Administration Association, an alumni group that actively supports the educational leadership program at IU. A recent initiative he helped launch is the teacher-leader master’s program conducted in collaboration with the Monroe County Community School Corporation. Characteristically generous with his time, talents, and resources, he is most content working behind the scenes to ensure that these and other endeavors succeed.

Among Leonard’s publications are several co-authored books: *Leadership and Change: The Special Education Role in Schools* (1976, 1980), *Policy and Management Issues in Special Education* (1986), *Leadership in Educational Reform: An Administrator’s Guide to Changes in Special Education* (1994), *Educating All Students Together* (2001), and *School Leaders Building Capacity from Within* (2005). His papers have appeared in the leading journals of his field, including *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Special Education*, *Journal of School Leadership*, and

Educational Administration Quarterly. He was the founding editor of *Special Education Leadership Review* (1991–1996).

Leonard is especially adept at generating resources to support research and development activities and graduate students, including competitive grants from the U.S. Department of Education, philanthropic foundations, private businesses, and state education departments. He used such funding to redesign special education programs in dozens of school districts in Indiana and other states. He is currently assisting several high schools in Indiana and Michigan in transforming their schools to emphasize personalized, learner-centered teaching. In 1995 he founded the Forum on Education, an entrepreneurial enterprise that uses technology to record and disseminate innovative, effective educational practices. Widely used throughout the nation, these professional development materials address topics such as co-teaching, positive behavior supports, wraparound services, learner-centered schools, and inclusion for children with disabilities.

No one is more serious about his work and professional obligations. But Leonard knows how to have a good time. The quintessential host, his home has always been open to his students, colleagues, and many IU hockey players over the years. A loving father and doting grandfather, Leonard bursts with pride when talking about his two children and four grandchildren, all of whom are close by in Chicago.

A cornerstone of Leonard Burrello's philosophy of educational improvement is that it is essential to identify, recruit, and prepare the very best people to be educational leaders. Once Leonard decides that individuals have the right stuff, he goes to extraordinary lengths to convince them to leave good jobs and move to Indiana for graduate study or faculty positions in the educational leadership unit.

Leonard has enriched the literature of his field and directed the work of more than 125 doctoral students. His legacy is his commitment to excellence and educational opportunity for all students, and this legacy will live on through the students he has mentored and molded into innovative thinkers and educational leaders. They can be found from Maine to California, working in classrooms, school leadership positions, and policy making roles. His boundless enthusiasm, loyalty to his students, and care and mentoring of new faculty members have been inspirations to all who have been fortunate enough to know and work with Leonard Burrello.

Martha McCarthy and George Kuh