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Abstract

This paper describes how terms such as integration and mainstreaming are giving way to the concept of inclusion. It says that if this new reality is to become a source of personal growth and cultural enrichment for all its members, then teachers need to be prepared through both preservice and inservice education to become part of a school community where all students are both valued and expected to learn. **Keywords: Education, School age**

Helping Teachers Manage the Inclusive Classroom

Staff Development and Teaming Star Among Management Strategies

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More than two decades ago when "mainstreaming" sounded like something new, planning grants were awarded to schools of education as an incentive to include information on students with special needs within their teacher preparation programs.

At the time, mainstreaming seemed a bold venture. Public schools, structured around the belief that most students were "typical," had created unified curricula for large groups of such youngsters organized according to age. Now someone was going to enter the classroom who had special needs. What could possibly prepare teachers for this major shift in expectations?

Surely, the first step was to ensure regular education teachers were both more sensitive and more knowledgeable about these new students. As a result, many teacher education programs incorporated one or two special education courses at the pre-service level, most likely dealing with legal requirements and the characteristics of various handicapping conditions.

More changes occurred in the 1980s, as students with severe disabilities began to appear at the schoolhouse door. Again, our reaction was to learn



La Grange, Ill., Area Dept. of Special Education

about "the label"—as if knowing all about chromosomes and the latest diagnostic terms would somehow help teachers do what they needed to do in their classrooms.

One teacher we know who was told she soon would have two students with special needs in her third-grade class said, "I told the special education consultant 'I need to read some stuff on Down Syndrome. And Janie's autistic. Okay. I need to read some stuff on autism.' Then I'm reading about the 40 million different classifications of autism and it varies from child to child and IQ's vary with Down Syndrome, and this is like saying, 'Oh, yes, I'd like to have

a manual on the third-grader please.' Right. ... They don't make blueprints for kids!"

Could one or two courses—or a series of inservice workshops—focused on various handicapping conditions possibly prepare the regular classroom teacher for these new challenges?

Classroom Diversity

"I counted up that there are seven kids in here that I feel are high-needs kids besides Tyrone (a student with Down Syndrome). Not high needs as far as academics. ... I consider Jessica a high-needs kid because things just

break down so easily for her."

This teacher touches on various issues of diversity in the "regular" classroom with "typical" students. There are other realities of diversity as well. Gender can be a subtle but powerful source of influence upon children if teachers mirror society's differential stereotypes for boys and girls.

One-fourth of today's young children are living in poverty and do not come to school ready to learn. One-fourth of today's ninth graders will not graduate from high school four years from now.

Clearly, many children with and without diagnosed handicapping conditions have tremendous needs, and school may be the one environment that could be safe, nurturing, and enabling for young people who otherwise would find themselves in a downward spiral.

Other aspects of diversity can and should become sources of personal sustenance for children. Cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity is a reality that should be enriching for all children and for our society.

In the Syracuse, N.Y. City School District, virtually half of the students in the middle schools are members of a "minority" group. In such settings, old ideas of mainstream versus minority cultures are neither descriptive nor helpful.

Perhaps it is most fitting, then, that terms such as mainstreaming and integration are giving way to the concept of inclusion. Inclusion has no conditions and makes no differential value judgments. Everyone belongs, everyone is welcome, and everyone has a contribution to make.

Yet if this new reality is to become a source of personal growth and cultural enrichment for all its members, teachers now need much more than classes on handicapping conditions. They need to be prepared through both preservice and inservice education to become part of a new school community where all students are both valued and expected to learn.

Instructional Strategies

Rather than existing as a separate system and set of resources, special education must become part of a unified educational system to better ac-

commodate today's diverse student needs.

The significant contribution of special education in meeting children's needs has been in developing a technology of individualization. Special educators can assess learning styles and academic skill levels, identify social and behavioral needs, and organize the team around an individualized plan to meet both academic and non-academic needs.

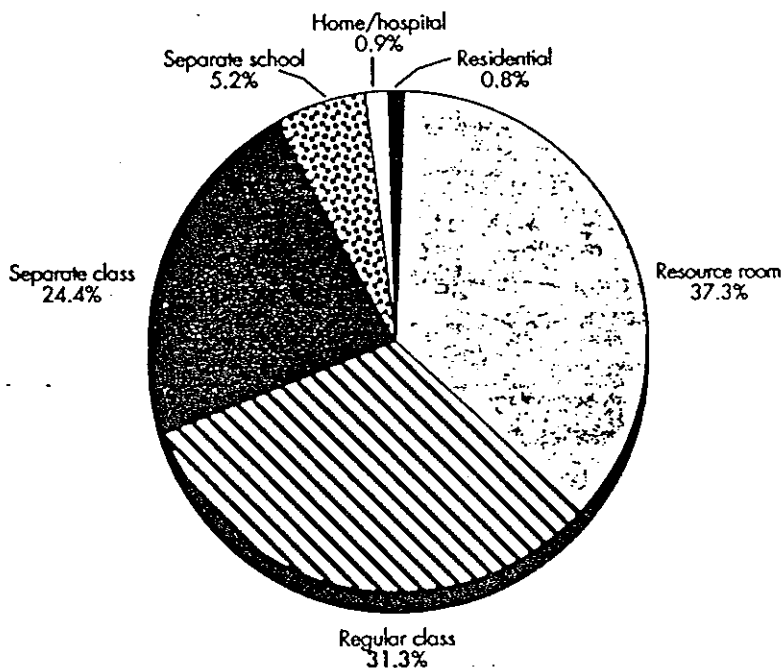
This technology can be a valuable contribution to the regular classroom—particularly if the resources of

proposition. Our society is full of people who work together to solve problems.

School offers children a time and a place to learn how to be members of society—how to be part of working groups, play groups, and communities and how to make friends. This socialization process is sometimes referred to as school's "hidden agenda."

We take peer relationships for granted without fully acknowledging the crucial role friendships play in preparing children for adult life. But more and more, the implicit socializa-

Percentage of All Students with Disabilities Ages 3-21 Served in Six Educational Placements



Definitions: Regular class includes students who receive most of their education in a typical class and receive special education for less than 21 percent of the day.

Resource room includes students who receive special education for 21 to 60 percent of the day.

Separate class includes students who receive special education for more than 60 percent of the day.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

special education become more readily available to intervene on behalf of any child at risk regardless of labels.

But individualized instruction cannot address all the needs of the regular classroom. Life is not a one-to-one

and group experiences in school are not sufficient to adequately prepare tomorrow's citizens. We should become as explicit about social-emotional goals as we have been

regarding academic expectations for children.

Educational innovations such as cooperative learning developed by David and Roger Johnson, Robert Slavin, Spencer Kagan, Shlomo Sharan, and others have double value: They do indeed enable children to master important academic goals, but they also teach children how to be part of a social unit.

In addition, whole language approaches to reading and language arts empower children to bring their culture and experiences into the classroom where they are valued and become an integral part of the academic learning process.

Interdisciplinary teaching at the middle school level challenges teachers to integrate their subject specialty concerns into broader themes, current events, and the daily activities of their students, rather than teaching each subject in isolation and hoping students will generalize the skills they learn to the world around them.

Interdisciplinary teaching has the added potential of helping students see the relevance of school to their own needs.

Teaming Approaches

Teaching can be a lonely profession. Many teachers spend the majority of their school day with students, in isolation from other adults. Although some teachers prefer this autonomy, many are beginning to value opportunities to collaborate with their peers as they work together to address the needs of all their students within the classroom.

Sometimes this partnership begins with a general education teacher and a special education teacher working together, an entire grade-level team, or a teacher and a teaching assistant. One teacher told us, "I really like the team idea. I like the support of it, I like the structure of it, I just really enjoy it. It's really nice to be able to bounce ideas off somebody else."

Yet it is not always easy for adults to work together. This is not something we ourselves experienced in elementary or secondary school or in college. This is changing, as today's young people participate in cooperative learning at all levels.

But since today's teachers generally did not have such cooperative group experiences, school leaders must provide support and practice to enable teachers to master collaborative teaming.

Successful teaching teams have the same components as successful cooperative learning groups: positive interdependence, face-to-face interactions, interpersonal and small-group skills, individual accountability, and group processing.

Administrative support is crucial if teachers are to work together to address the needs of all their students in a collaborative manner.

On the interdisciplinary teams at four Syracuse middle schools, five subject area teachers and one special education teacher are given common planning time during the school day so they can discuss lessons and individual students and share information about successful adaptations and accommodations.

These teams are piloting interdisciplinary teaching, continuous progress, student portfolios, and a peer support networking approach to create new ways to reach at-risk students and prevent school dropouts.

These innovations are not easily accommodated by the traditional structure of the middle school day, and what may seem like a simple change—block scheduling to allow for team teaching across two consecutive class periods—will not be possible minus administrative support.

Without mutual and administrative support, teachers can feel overwhelmed by the demands of working with numerous different adults and trying to touch base during lunch, before and after school, or while passing in the hallways.

Inservice Training

Educational researchers often have bemoaned what they see as resistance by school systems and teachers to innovations. They ask, "Why don't practitioners enthusiastically and immediately implement the innovations described in the journals?"

We think implementation of models will continue to be a problem as long as teachers and administrators

are regarded as passive consumers of "packages" created and developed under totally different circumstances.

Many of the innovations described in this article—from the broad construct of inclusion to specific curricular and instructional components such as whole language and cooperative learning—represent a new way of doing things for schools.

Typically, program developers assumed the way to get teachers to adopt a new model was to tightly control staff development, provide "teacher-proof" materials, and closely monitor all phases of implementation. We disagree.

We believe that unless teachers are empowered and recognized as leadership personnel who know their students and circumstances better than anyone else, model implementation →

will continue to be a problem. If teachers are to be prepared for inclusion—or for any other innovation—they must take ownership of that innovation.

Task Forces Preferred

We successfully have used a task force model at school and district levels to lead the way to new directions. An important difference between a task force and a "train the trainers" approach is that the task force initially agrees upon certain basic goals and premises, but then is empowered to develop specific plans as a group effort.

Our Stay In School Partnership Project in the Syracuse middle schools, for example, began with a few shared assumptions and values: We would not establish yet another pull-out program and we would instead attempt to create conditions that would help at-risk students consider themselves part of their school communities.

Beginning with these basic points, the task force then was empowered to examine a variety of approaches and components, always weighing each against a basic template of assumptions and values and selecting and adapting those that made the most sense for the group.

Similarly, for three years we have supported small study groups of teachers and parents focused on selected issues of interest to the participants. For example, one of our study groups this year includes eight teachers and parents from several Central New York school districts interested in multicultural issues for students with special needs and their families.

The group will meet monthly during non-school times, select and schedule their information-gathering process, learn about new practices, and prepare themselves to become a source of information and mentoring to other teachers and team members.

One of our most successful inservice activities of the past several years was last year's open house sponsored by the study groups. More than 100 teachers, administrators, and parents came to hear their peers present what they had learned and adapted for the variety of regional circumstances.

At Syracuse University, our teacher preparation program has come full

circle. The Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation has a long and illustrious history of preparing special educators at all professional levels and an equally longstanding positive relationship with the Division for the Study of Teaching, which traditionally has prepared elementary, middle, and high school teachers. All preservice teachers had at least a minimal introduction to special needs.

Previously, a "dual" program existed that basically was two programs taken in parallel—not unlike the dual programs that exist in many schools of education. Meanwhile, the public schools in Central New York were becoming increasingly inclusive. Even students with the most severe disabilities can be found in regular classrooms.

Walking the Talk

At SU, we decided we had to practice what we preached: If schools could become inclusive, then perhaps teacher education had better keep up. If teachers are being expected to include, integrate, and incorporate diversity into their practices, university-level teacher educators should model those same practices and not simply lecture about them.

Hence, since 1990, our undergraduates enroll in one Inclusive Elementary and Special Education Program and complete a sequence of courses designed to demonstrate—and not just talk about—the inclusive principles and practices increasingly evidenced in our schools.

Who is in the best position to predict what tomorrow's teachers will need? Universities have long been in the business of believing they define both excellence and innovation. Their historical role as producers of new knowledge is an appropriate one and likely to continue.

But the practice of teacher education must be far more responsive to societal changes and take far more seriously the responsibility of modeling the very innovations researchers promote for schools.

Preservice teacher education programs must play a proactive role in modeling process and content that reflects the best practices emerging from research and development. Staff development at the inservice level has the advantage of being imminently flexible and thus potentially can respond immediately to changing requirements.

However, the one-shot approach to staff development has a long history of not making a difference. Teachers need more than being told or reading about what they should do. Inservice training must be ongoing and dynamic and must empower practitioners and parents to support one another as they define the shape an innovation will take in their schools and classrooms.

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