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What keeps inclusion working? : an examination of current ideas

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What keeps inclusion working? : an examination of current ideas

Abstract

Inclusion, which began as an implication in Public Law 94-142, now draws the attention of many authors, teachers and parents. The "least restrictive environment" phrase from that legislation leads to the following simple conclusion: Many of the strategies mentioned in the research of this paper produce real results.

Classwide peer tutoring, thoughtful reading strategies that can be individually tailored and mnemonics for remembering those strategies do work. Still, the weight of their worth comes down to how well the teacher does his job everyday. In fact, all successes and failures of teaching come down to that basic fact. If a teacher struggles with the basics of how to teach, the results will be poor at best. A good teacher, committed to seeing that every student learns is practicing the best kind of inclusion. When all students learn, we all reap rewards down the road.

WHAT KEEPS INCLUSION WORKING?

AN EXAMINATION OF CURRENT IDEAS

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Kevin McRae

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Chapter 1

Introduction.

Teachers of students with disabilities, when given the opportunity, can present an in-the-trenches view of an issue like no other educator can. As a 13 year veteran of public education, this author has taught students of all levels and abilities, but has most often been exposed to the inclusion process as an alleged collaborator in the regular classroom with students with disabilities. My interest in the topic is to gain a sense of what inclusion is supposed to be and apply that knowledge locally in my own school.

Inclusion would have little validity were it not for a piece of legislation called PL 94-142. Among its provisions, this law guarantees any student with a disability be educated the best way they can without removing them from the regular classroom, except when necessary. This legislation also says that an IEP, or individualized education program be developed for each student with a disability and ensures this program be enforced by making it a legal document. In the history of education, no other document demanded such legal standards be enforced, nor are there others that so clearly set the stage for inclusion.

PL 94-142 did not, however, necessitate that students with disabilities be taught in the regular education classes with their peers. Nor did IDEA of 1997 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) mandate inclusion. The word "inclusion" is not mentioned in either of these landmark pieces of legislation. Inclusion is a term coined by the educational community to help support the "least restrictive environment" phrase mentioned in P.L. 94-142.

There are two types of laws that dictate how students with disabilities will be taught. One is statute law, which is created and enacted by the federal government's legislative body.

The other is case law, created and enacted by judges at a state or local level. As strong as statute laws are, they can still be overridden by case law.

As an example, when the case of Obertie v. Clementon (1993) was presented, P.L. 94-142 was already in place, but the Obertie case made a difference on how that statute law was to be interpreted. The concept of inclusion became clearer as a result of that ruling. The judge wrote, "inclusion is a 'right' not a privilege for a select few. Success in special schools and special classes does not lead to successful functioning in integrated society, which is clearly one of the goals of the IDEA." (Douvanis, & Hulsey, 2002, p. 2)

To further clarify, a recent article from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services states that when a federal law is ruled on by a local judge, the outcome on which takes precedence can vary.

> "States receiving IDEA funds must ensure that their regulations are consistent with the requirements of the Federal laws and regulations, but there is no requirement that State regulations use terminology that is identical to the language of the Federal regulations. When there are differences, the determination of which regulations would take precedence would depend on the particular facts and circumstances. For example, if the State regulation creates a stricter standard of compliance than in the Federal regulation under IDEA, or supplements the Federal regulation, but does not conflict with the Federal regulation under IDEA, the State regulation would control. In contrast, if the standard in the State regulation is less stringent, the State must conform its law to the Federal standard in order to receive IDEA funds." (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p. 16)

This means students with disabilities must be educated as the federal law directs; in the least restrictive setting. What it doesn't state is specifically how that is to take place or where that place is. Some local statutes may dictate details, but the federal law is a skeleton to be fleshed out by local judges and districts within the structure that law provides.

Inclusion is a word that has eluded a single definition, but has multiple interpretations. From a global perspective, inclusion means, "inviting those who have been historically locked

out to "come in". It may also mean, "Recognizing our universal "oneness" and interdependence. Inclusion is recognizing that we are "one" even though we are not the "same".(Asante, 2003)

The following definition is the focus of this paper: "(1) that every child should be included in a regular classroom to the optimum extent appropriate to the needs of that child while preserving the placements and services that special education can provide..." (Smith, 1995, p.2)

The purpose of inclusion is, in the manner of this definition, to include those who were excluded due to their difference. This would include differences of race, cultural identity and religion. The place from which they are excluded may mean any place those excluded wish to gain entrance, but for the purpose here, it means a public or parochial school.

The debate over inclusion began officially when the groundbreaking legislation was conceived and written for what was called the Handicapped Children's Early Education Act, or public law 90-583 in 1968. From that law, Head Start programs were born, serving birth to three and beyond.[1] Prior to that, many believe the civil rights movement of the early1960's was the actual beginning of a nationwide assertion that all people have rights, and indeed, in photos of marches held on the capitol, one can see people in wheelchairs alongside marchers of color.

After this, public law 94-142 was written and enacted in the 1970's. It had provisions for students with disabilities and it made the strongest case yet for placing students in the regular classroom via the first use of the phrase "least restrictive environment. Fast forward to 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act was produced by Congress. This act had implications for students and workers in terms of access to public buildings including schools, but the word inclusion was never used, and it is not part of the law.

Today, much of the legislation described here has been rolled into the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act of 1998, and amendments are added or proposed with nearly each

session of congress. The phrase "least restrictive environment" is coined within the law, but the word inclusion is never used. Current literature is full of modern interpretations of what's right and wrong regarding inclusion. While none of the articles and books reviewed here arrives at any absolute conclusion, each one adds another log to the already incendiary fire of debate over the issue of how effective inclusion truly is. The information generated in current literature has a strong basis in fact when accommodations are made to apply the data to a more common setting.

Reviewing most of the current issues of educational periodicals will reveal some evidence of the lack of clarity on what inclusion is, how inclusion works and what can be done to make inclusion produce measurable results. Many such articles acknowledge there is no universally agreed upon definition for the word inclusion. Each article seeks and finds a niche or an angle on inclusion, but these all have the same idea: What instructional methods help make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom and which of these methods do or do not promote inclusion?

Statement of the Problem

1) What instructional methods promote and help make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom?

2) What prevents teachers from teaching effectively in inclusive schools?

3) What are the components of an effective inclusive school?

4) What are the implications for my school?

Significance of the Problem

Inclusion is an issue because it has been recently presented and represented as a public law under such legislation as PL 94-142. These laws place the burden of providing a fair, appropriate education for students with disabilities on the shoulders of the school a student attends. Once a student has been identified for service due to a disability, the school that student attends must make arrangements to implement the needs on the IEP and do so as directed by PL 94-142 and other successive legislation.

It is also an issue because the population of students with special needs has grown dramatically over the past two decades, "Since IDEA went into effect in 1976, special education has grown enormously. In 1994/95, for example, more than 5.2 million children (10% of all students enrolled in school) were receiving special education services." (Wade, 2000, p.5)

Further, inclusion affects all students due to the nature of its requirement that all students be educated together as much as is appropriate. "IDEA also requires that a student's education take place in the least restrictive environment. This means that students should remain with their nondisabled chronological age peers 'to the maximum extent appropriate'." (Dowdy, et al, 1998, p. 14)

Finally, teachers, oftentimes without any training, try to accommodate students with special needs in their regular classroom with their non-disabled peers with bad results.

"Unfortunately, many programs that claim to be inclusive are inclusive in name only. Many "model" programs are actually poor examples that violate basic tenets of inclusive education; that is, educators are poorly prepared, classrooms are overpopulated with identified and low-achieving students, and specialists have unwieldy caseloads that prevent meaningful classroom support." (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000, p. 15)

Definition of Terms

Inclusion can also be narrowed to mean, "Inclusion represents the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into general education classrooms and schools and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities." (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, p. 38)

Again, for the purpose of this paper, the definition of focus is "(1) that every child should be included in a regular classroom to the optimum extent appropriate to the needs of that child while preserving the placements and services that special education can provide..." (Smith, 1995, p. 2)

The term "mainstreaming" is often confused with "inclusion", but its definition differs from "inclusion". Mainstreaming refers to the actual amount of time a student with disabilities spends in a general education classroom, after it has been determined he can meet the basic expectations for that setting. So, mainstreaming is the application of inclusion, whereas inclusion is a more generalized, philosophical term. The two are used interchangeably in much of the literature reviewed here.

"Special class", or "pull-out" instruction refers to the practice of teaching a student with special needs in a setting other than the regular classroom, or pulling the student from a regular class for a specific amount of time for the purpose of remediation or more focused study as determined by the disability and/or parent request.

A "disability" is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such an individual (IDEA, 1990). A "learning disability" is a cognitive impairment that affects how a student processes, organizes, and applies academic information (Friend & Bursuck, 2002).

"Emotional disturbance" is a term synonymous with behavior disorder. This refers to students who are of average intelligence but have problems learning primarily because of external and/or internal behavioral problems (Friend & Bursuck, 2002) The term "mentally disabled" is also synonymous with mild cognitive disability, which means the students have some problems meeting the academic and social demands of regular classes due to below-average intellectual functioning. (Friend & Bursuck, 2002)

Chapter 2 – Review of Current Literature

Chapter two focuses on current issues having to do with inclusion and asks each author to provide an answer to one of the questions proposed earlier. They are:

1) What instructional methods promote and help make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom?

2) What prevents teachers from teaching effectively in inclusive schools?

3) What are the components of an effective inclusive school?

What instructional methods help promote inclusion and make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom?

Review of Restructuring for Inclusion: Changing Teaching Practices

Ideas on instructional techniques for making inclusion effective in a collaborative setting are a main focus for Kilgore, et al (2002). Documentation was made of a middle school's journey towards becoming a truly inclusive school where all students with disabilities and their support staff were to be involved with the instruction of all students with the idea of including all students and producing measurable results for those with disabilities. At Coral Springs Middle School, through extensive training and in-servicing, the majority of the staff accepted students with disabilities and students at risk into their classrooms and began taking responsibility for each students learning and succeeding.

Communication among teachers helped facilitate the changes the school needed to make as it became an inclusive school. Each teacher in the school took time to understand the changes they needed to make to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms.

"CSMS teachers shared their successes and failures in team meetings and in weekly professional development sessions open to all teachers. They invited colleagues in to observe their classes, continuing the open-door policy initiated in 1989 when CSMS began its whole school reform efforts. To facilitate conversations about teaching and learning, the CES coordinator posted a weekly list of teachers employing specific strategies and times when colleagues could observe their teaching. Co-teachers modeled teaching strategies on their teams."(Kilgore, et al, 2002, p. 8)

Once these groups got underway, they took up the business of changing the way they taught lessons under the banner of differentiating instruction. The Coral Springs staff broke down their teaching practices under four areas of concern and worked to find solutions under each area.

The first area is "Planning for the Group". This area consists of ways to present lessons in a manner other than the traditional lecture/worksheet/teach method. The new strategies in use are interdisciplinary, thematic units, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, small group instruction, and computer-assisted instruction.

An example of this is a teacher would use cooperative learning to put students into groups and put into practice an idea originally presented by the teacher. A science teacher would do an initial lecture or discussion on inherited traits, then put students into groups to find out how many students in a group had a dominant trait, like detached earlobes. Students could then take this information home to determine which parent carried the dominant trait.

The second area is monitoring student progress. Teachers put into use authentic assessment as a way to incorporate task completion in a real-life setting. This also includes "various tools to evaluate student learning" so that actual grades can be determined. (Kilgore, et al, 2002, p.9)

For authentic assessment, a student with a disability in written language could produce an oral report on dominant traits in his family as an alternative to a written report. This would allow

the student to capitalize on his strength, while avoiding a writing task that would have been overly challenging.

The third area is providing special assistance. Under this heading, teachers use accommodations and modified assignments, one-to-one instruction and explicit instruction. These methods provide teachers with ways to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting every day.

For providing special assistance, a teacher could tape that lecture in inherited traits, present the assignment to the entire class and then take a student to the back of the room for a comprehension check and some one-to-one instruction on inherited traits.

The last area is grading students with disabilities. This states that "alternatives to traditional grading systems used in schools should be considered." (Kilgore, et al, 2002, p.9) For this area, the article states, "Teachers disagreed on how to grade students with disabilities. Some believed all students should be measured against a single yardstick, regardless of their different abilities and disabilities. This issue was not solved two years into the project and sometimes teachers on the same team disagreed on something as fundamental as how students should be graded." (Kilgore, et al, 2002, p. 9)

The article concludes that although the teachers are now accepting the responsibility for all learners, that responsibility comes with a lot of hard work and training. "Inclusion, as one (principal) stated, is not about children with disabilities – it's about whether educators are willing to accept responsibility for educating all students in a personalized and motivational way." (Kilgore, et al, 2002, p. 11)

Summary of <u>Restructuring for Inclusion: Changing Teaching Practices</u>

In summary, Kilgore found that training, inservice and subsequent communications during all phases of the implementation of inclusion are cornerstones of effective collaborative classrooms. The staff broke down their teaching practices for differentiating instruction under planning for the group, monitoring student progress, providing special assistance and grading students with disabilities.

Review of *Inclusion 101: How to teach all learners*

While Kilgore provided an all-school look at what instructional methods help make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom, the next book recommended specific strategies for all teachers to use to that same end.

Instructional techniques can take the form of a mnemonic device that can help students deal with the anxiety that sometimes comes with instruction. Bauer and Shea's book *Inclusion 101: How to teach all learners* mentions multiple strategies that can unlock a student's learning and help prevent or deter unwanted behavior. (Bauer & Shea, 1999)

Strategy instruction broadens the focus for those students and teaches them ways to meet the demands of daily classwork better on their own. Several studies are cited and within them, strategies are suggested.

Effective instruction should have a strong component of student self-generated strategies, they mention. One such example is a student-generated mnemonic named the BURP strategy for reading. (Bauer & Shea, 1999, p.260) It is: B = Breathe and relax; U = Understand what you read; R = Reread if you need to; P = Predict what will happen next.

The author of that strategy also recommends using a printed strategy bookmark to remind students to ask themselves a series of questions before beginning an assignment or reading from

a book. Those questions are: Am I ready to read? Am I paying attention? Am I understanding what I am reading? Did I achieve my purpose? (Bauer & Shea, 1999, p.260-261)

One set of authors noted in the chapter for writing strategies are Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony, and Stevens. They suggest the use of dialogue is important to the development of writing, as is providing scaffolding instruction. Scaffolding instruction is when there is adjustable support for the development of new skills. As the writing begins, there is a need to transform it from an individual task into a collaborative activity. This begins with the advent of self-talk as the task of writing starts.

The mnemonic device employed to help direct writer in his task and it is suggested use of the strategy results in improved overall writing quality. This mnemonic is: P (Plan), O (Organize), W (Write), E (Edit or Editor), R (Revise).

Another skill that is recommended to be taught as a strategy is generalization, or the transfer of learning from one area to another through behavioral reinforcement.

Through the use of these mnemonic devices, students can address their own behavior and do so without involving the teacher in the class. This saves both the teacher and the student's time in class, allowing for more reading time, the authors state.

The examples of instructional methods described above all help to promote inclusion in that they are useful for students with and without disabilities. Even the title of Bauer and Shea's book, *Inclusion 101: How to teach all learners* suggests that the information shared in the book has applications for all learners.

For best results, Bauer and Shea suggest that learning strategies should be thoughtfully put into motion, monitored and periodically evaluated to determine their effectiveness. These steps ensure that the strategies will remain effective for the duration of their use.

Summary of *Inclusion 101: How to teach all learners*

To summarize, Bauer and Shea recommended instructional techniques in the form of mnemonic strategies that are student-generated, easily accessible and used in content-specific ways. The authors feel these techniques broaden the focus for students with disabilities, while helping them to meet the demands of the class on their own.

Review of *New Ways of Looking At Learning Disabilities: Connections to Classroom Practice*

Moving away from mnemonic-based strategies, the next book finds methods to help make curriculum-specific strategies work in the classroom. Most of *New Ways of Looking At Learning Disabilities: Connections to Classroom Practice* is about finding ways to put more power into curriculum and direct teach time. The book is a collection of authors who stress various parts of the curriculum, but each finds a niche and discusses a number of strategies for their curricular area is based on classroom experience rather than research.

Information most relevant to the question "what instructional methods promote and help make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom?" lie in section three of the book, "Student-Centered Curriculum Approaches". Editors Denti and Tefft-Cousin say that student-centered curriculum is more about finding ways to change curriculum based on what we know about how students with disabilities learn and less about focusing on basic skills the way special education has in the past. The focus is on the individual learner, making the teaching process as simple and "transparent" as possible. (Denti, & Tefft-Cousin, 2001, p. 191).

Contributing authors Gleason and Archer write about how teaching study skill strategies can create chances for students to pick up skills they need to participate in class in inclusive settings. The article is broken up into two sections: The first describes how to select study skill strategies and the second details the actual teaching of learning strategies.

The authors suggest following curriculum guidelines in selecting study skill strategies to teach. They say the skill must be useful to the students relative to age and ability level. Next, the skill must be able to be transferred to other settings and across time. Last, the skill strategy should have a purposeful application.

Once these determinants have been reviewed, the actual teaching of the strategies may begin. The authors use as their examples strategies those focusing mainly on reading and writing, learning from lectures and studying materials for improved comprehension.

Among these, the strategy for determining the meaning of unknown words serves to help students learn how to decode unfamiliar words on their own. The authors say that teachers have the option of pre-teaching words, but in the event that isn't possible, this strategy gives students the ability to construct the meaning of the words on their own. This strategy involves simply using context clues, the glossary, or a dictionary to determine meaning. Students should then restate the definition in a brief form and put the word in the passage. After this, students should ask themselves if their definition makes sense.

A second approach to understanding unknown words is to teach students to use context clues within an unknown word. One example given suggests that unknown words should be broken down into parts so words like dissimilar can be taught as "dis" meaning "not" and "similar" means "the same". Combining these clues gives the student the ability to sort out that the meaning of the word is "not similar" without using additional resources. This technique is applicable at nearly all grade levels, the author states.

Another author in the *New Ways* book finds the use of technology essential to make inclusion effective in a collaborative classroom. Mary Male includes lesson designs for situations not readily associated with technology instruction. Social development and student

interdependence are critical components to each lesson. In these lessons, the author successfully teaches students with the idea that the team is important and that no one student is responsible for success unless all students in the group are. (Denti, & Tefft-Cousin, p. 227)

The lesson design is universal and no content-specific suggestions were made. Using the outline provided, teachers may apply any computer-interactive content they chose and follow these steps to create a cooperative computer lesson:

1. Assignment to Teams and Team Preparation. This is used to make sure a good mix of students is achieved.

2. Creating Positive Interdependence Among Students. This part is critical in that it is to impart that if one person on the team is unsuccessful, the entire team is unsuccessful.

3. Individual Accountability. Even within the group, the teacher needs to establish that every student can demonstrate an understanding of the lesson.

4. Direct Teaching of Social Skills. Teachers work in a particular social skill during the lesson and have students incorporate it into their group work. For example, praising can be taught and group members can practice the skill during the lesson.

5. Processing. Done in a way so that students can begin to share what they did and furthers the ideas of group importance.

Mary Male included the results of a survey done when the students had tried her team building lessons for 2 months. She found that, "students became more altruistic toward their partners in the cooperative setting and preferred cooperative to individualistic learning. The

achievement of students in the cooperative learning groups was also slightly higher than that of the students in the individualistic setting." (Denti, & Tefft-Cousin, p.235)

Each of the authors in the book sees a collaborative classroom as the norm to be dealt with in a constructivist manner, building skills for learners of all ability levels. As Foreward author Patricia Swanson stated, "They stress the development of language skills through meaningful communication and are structured to maximize student interaction...They are the strategies too often reserved for the "gifted" class, which are essential for students with learning disabilities. They are strategies for all children." (Denti, & Tefft-Cousin, p. ix)

Summary of *New Ways of Looking At Learning Disabilities: Connections to Classroom Practice*

To summarize, in *New Ways of Looking at Learning Disabilities: Connections to Classroom Practice*, the information in the third section of the book has to do with finding ways to change curriculum based on what we know about how students with disabilities learn best. In that vein, the suggestions are to teach study skills strategies, strategies for unknown words and the use of technology in cooperative learning.

Review of *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for Inclusion of Children with Learning Disabilities*

The following book is wholly research based, and as such, provides numerous strategies and approaches for students with special needs that are proven effective through research. It looks at a social/cognitive perspective of what instructional methods help promote inclusion and make it effective in collaborative classrooms.

In *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for Inclusion of Children with Learning Disabilities*, the editors seek out other researchers who feel the social structure within the classroom environment is a key to unlocking learning potential, particularly for students with

learning disabilities. Within that idea, contributing author Fuchs suggests an instructional

strategy and its implications for students with learning disabilities when compared with another

highly regarded instructional strategy.

Before detailing the strategy, Fuchs states that different theoretical perspectives add into

the debate of what classroom instruction should look like. The two perspectives are

constructivist and behavioral. In the constructivist model, teachers and students share in the job

of the learner and ideas are exchanged to create new knowledge. In the behavioral model which

involves instruction that is a, "dynamic, reciprocal, interdependent process: Changes in alterable

classroom features influence student learning…Clearly, however, student engagement is the key

variable." (Speece and Keough, 1996, p. 82)

The strategy from the behavioral model is classwide peer tutoring. This strategy involves

students working in pairs on structured activities that are taught at an instructional level.

The strategy from the constructivist model is the KEEP model. The KEEP strategy is an

acronym for the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program, which was designed to help

increase the literacy rate among native Hawaiians. (Speece and Keough, 1996, p. 20-21)

In the KEEP model, six aspects of literacy are addressed: ownership, the writing process,

reading comprehension, word reading strategies and spelling, language and vocabulary

knowledge, and voluntary reading.

Summary of *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for Inclusion of Children with*
Learning Disabilities

The book *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for Inclusion of Children with*
Learning Disabilities states that both a constructivist and a behavioral model are represented in

the book through instructional strategies. Those two strategies are a classwide peer tutoring (behavioral) and the KEEP strategy for improving literacy (constructivist).

Review of *Professional Issues in Learning Problems: Practical Strategies and Relevant Research Findings*

In the next selection, the authors and their contributors look at ways to help students with disabilities become better readers and what methods available best apply in collaborative classrooms.

In the book *Professional Issues in Learning Problems: Practical Strategies and Relevant Research Findings*, the authors point out repeatedly on the implication of teaching students with learning disabilities in the regular classroom and how those implications address our two questions.

In *Professional Issues*, editor Bender separates the book into two sections: One is filled with classroom strategies to be used with students with learning disabilities and the other is emerging issues. In the preface, Bender says that the chapters are written by some of the most respected writers in their fields, and that what they write is there to "enliven your professional debates with colleagues". (Bender, 1999, p. viii)

Bender writes in the first chapter about multiple authors who believe the success or failure of inclusive classes is, "…still open to question," and that the real success of any course or school is one that keeps children (students) as their focus. (Bender, 1999, p. 23) Once this focus is regained, inclusion will be more effective in collaborative classrooms.

In many of the chapters, the strategies given are designed to work in both a collaborative and self-contained setting and in that manner, may aid teachers in both inclusive and self-contained classrooms.

Chapter four is authored by editor Bender and is entitled "Innovative Approaches to Reading". Bender begins the chapter with the key idea that, "Reading is one of the most – if not the most – important skills taught in schools today." (Bender, 1999, p. 83)

In the chapter, Bender discusses the need to formally address the problems students with learning disabilities have with reading. In order to do so, Bender presents a reading skills hierarchy from age two to high school level.

Next, Bender presents "Recently Developed Instructional Approaches for Reading". Here, he describes strategies that help make inclusion effective due to the fact they apply to all learners, not just those with disabilities.

For example, the POSSE strategy is featured in the chapter. POSSE is an acronym that stands for predicting, organizing, searching, summarizing, and evaluating a piece of literature. (Bender, 1999, p.94) This strategy provides those with learning disabilities and their non-disabled peers a way to scaffold information while reading, according to Bender.

Bender goes on to say that a strategy like this will allow readers with and without disabilities to have a greater understanding of a book while reading, increasing reading confidence. A more confident reader will score better on assessments. A strategy like this presents opportunities for the teacher interested in making his classroom a modern, constructivist, inclusion-friendly environment.

A key to the success of the strategy involves completing certain tasks before, during and after reading a passage. Bender states, "Those tasks include (a) predicting what happens in a story, (b) organizing those predictions, (c) searching for main ideas, (d) summarizing the ideas, and (e) evaluating the story." (Bender, 1999, p. 94)

Actually using the strategy would involve the student receiving a semantic map and review the section to be read before reading it. The student would then read the passage, using the map to take notes as they find information fitting for various parts of the map. The end result would be a map with information from the text which the student could review or put away for future use as it became necessary.

Summary of *Professional Issues in Learning Problems: Practical Strategies and Relevant Research Findings*

To summarize Bender's ideas, he finds the use of strategies that aid students with and without disabilities in scaffolding information useful. His POSSE strategy means the reader completes analysis of the book before, during and after reading. He also recommends using semantic mapping to help understand the development of the book.

Summary for source materials used in response to question one.

In the section past, the focus is on instructional methods and how they promote and make inclusion effective in a collaborative setting. Kilgore suggests the use of training, inservice and continued communication among staff as collaboration is introduced. Bauer and Shea give multiple mnemonic strategies, designed by both teachers and students, to be used in collaborative classrooms. They also state these should be carefully put into use, monitored and periodically evaluated to make sure they are effective.

Other material reviewed includes section three from *New Ways of Looking at Learning Disabilities: Connections to Classroom Practice*. In this book, the concept of changing curriculum to best help students with disabilities is put forth. The suggestions are to incorporate study skill strategies, strategies for unknown words and use of technology in cooperative learning into daily lesson plans.

Strategies from *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for Inclusion of Children with Learning Disabilities* include a behavioral model of classwide peer tutoring and a constructivist model of a reading strategy designed to help increase literacy of a specific population.

In the final book from this section, editor Bender focuses his writing on explanations and strategies having to do with reading problems in students with disabilities. He concludes that most readers benefit from analyzing what they read before, during and after they pick up a book.

These authors all find in common the use of specific strategies for specific outcomes in collaborative classes. They all see the value of applying their ideas across settings in order to make their instructional methods make a more effective collaborative classroom.

What keeps teachers from teaching effectively during inclusion?

In the following books, these authors highlight issues that point a finger at what keeps teachers from teaching effectively during inclusion. Each of these books provides specific information on what inclusion should be and do to further itself and to keep a focus on teachers teaching effectively during inclusion.

Review of *Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings*

At the beginning of chapter two in *Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings*, authors Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy state that while putting students with special needs in the general education classroom has received a great deal of attention on a philosophical level, there is less discussion on how to specifically, successfully do that. (Smith, Dowdy, Patton, & Polloway, 1998, p. 34)

The one issue, the authors state, that keeps teachers from teaching successfully and effectively during inclusion is the acceptance of diversity. They say this acceptance is not likely to happen easily and without enormous changes in the way schools operate.

They quote one study in which the author says,

> "The real challenge is a lot harder and more complicated than we thought. Neither special nor general education alone has either the capacity or the vision to challenge and change the deep-rooted assumptions that separate and track children and youths according to presumptions about ability, achievement, and eventual social contribution. Meaningful change will require nothing less than a joint effort to reinvent schools to be more accommodating to all dimensions of human diversity." (Smith, et al, 1998, p. 34)

The authors go on to say that the positive steps necessary to improve the status of inclusion and make it easier for teachers to teach effectively can begin on a classroom-by-classroom and school-by-school basis.

They also mention that creating an effective inclusive classroom has an effect on student's immediate and long-term needs. While we may want students to learn and work with peers with disabilities, we also are hoping for a society comprised of adults who can live alongside those same peers. If that opportunity to learn alongside students with disabilities is diminished in any way, we may not be able to accomplish these goals.

Summary of *Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings*

Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy, in summary, feel that the acceptance of diversity is the major issue keeping teachers from teaching effectively during inclusion. They state that change must occur in a classroom-by-classroom basis and school-by-school basis.

Review of *Research on Classroom Ecologies*

In the next book, editors Speece and Keogh look at the administrative and curricular structure within an inner city school to determine what keeps teachers from teaching effectively during inclusion.

In another selection from the book *Research on Classroom Ecologies*, a contributing author finds inconsistent administrative support a major reason teachers can't teach effectively in one school district.

Contributing author Greenwood spent 16 years working with students with and without disabilities in a public housing project: "...a historically African American, low-income neighborhood." (Speece and Keough, 1996, p. 39)

The largest issue there that kept teachers from teaching effectively was the use of conventional teaching methods. Greenwood remarked how struck he was that the conventional teaching methods used were not able to engage students' learning. As he puts it, "Thus, the lower achievement of at-risk, inner-city children soon became a hypothesis implicating conventional instructions' general failure to accelerate and sustain academic responding." (Speece and Keough, 1996, p. 46)

As a response to the initial problem keeping teachers from teaching effectively, Greenwood devised a class wide peer tutoring system for use in all classrooms, including those where inclusion was being practiced. In doing so, Greenwood encountered what he terms 'systems problems' that kept the teachers and students involved from benefiting from the tutoring.

Greenwood's example of a system problem is when, during a class wide peer tutoring session, a curriculum supervisor cancelled the session because "it wasn't consistent with district goals". (Speece and Keough, 1996, p. 50)

This cancellation occurred even though the principal had approved the sessions, and the classroom teacher was also in favor of the tutoring. So, in order to address problems like this, Greenwood developed an administrative-adoption model for class wide peer tutoring that aided addressing issues that arise during implementation of class wide peer tutoring.

This administrative-adoption model addressed multiple issues that kept the program from being effective, including: formal acceptance of class wide peer tutoring for use in both general education and special education, formal certification of class wide peer tutoring for use in IEP's, training of additional staff regarding class wide peer tutoring, administrative and classroom evaluative procedures and formal integration of both special and general education students within the program.

Greenwood also evaluated the effect this administrative-adoption model had on the class wide peer tutoring and found that implementation quality increased from 88% to 94% between years one and two. They also found that the percentage of teachers using classwide peer tutoring increased from 78% in year one to 82% in year two. They also report that class wide peer tutoring has become a basic element in their burgeoning school-wide inclusion implementation for students with disabilities.

Summary of source materials for question two

The two sources cited in this section find acceptance of diversity, use of conventional teaching methods and systems problems at the root of the issue of what keeps teachers from

teaching effectively during inclusion. Each author proposed changes or solutions to each of the obstacles and found that both are difficult to implement effectively.

What are the components of an effective inclusive school?

Review of *Adolescents and Inclusion: Transforming Secondary Schools*

While periodical authors currently seem to have a focus on costs, curriculum and content, many collections and single author works have a focus on the components of an effective inclusive school.

As an example, in *Adolescents and Inclusion: Transforming Secondary Schools*, Bauer and Brown (2001) seek to define what an inclusive high school looks like, how it works and how to get the most out of an inclusive high school. In this action research book, the authors sought out one high school that embodied the rather elusive ideals that inclusion needs for success, spent time there and recorded their results.

The book presents that high school as a microcosm of what an effective inclusive school is. The book, "… is written with the teachers and staff of an inclusive high school. The strategies, procedures, practices and examples provided are all real and have emerged from a commitment to serve students of all cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and ability groups in a safe and successful environment." (Bauer & Brown, 2001, p.9-10) In Purcell Marian High School, the authors identified multiple qualities that are consistent with those inclusion goals, including improving academic success.

Chapter 2 defines the Qualities of an Inclusive High School, as the title of the chapter suggests, which literally are the components of an effective inclusive school. The chapter begins with a quote from the Council for Exceptional Children which defines an inclusive high school

as having, "…a diverse problem-solving organization with a common mission that emphasizes learning for all students." (Bauer & Brown, 2001, p. 11)

It goes on to say that an inclusive high school has teachers and staff committed to working together to create a climate for learning and that the responsibility for all students is shared. This commitment is shared by administrators, supported with technical assistance and professional development. All problems and successes are shared as well.

Specifically, the chapter identifies the following components as those identified with an effective inclusive school:

1.   Principal Leadership in an Inclusive High School. Authors Brown and Bauer state that a principal who wishes to create a climate that facilitates inclusive education must encourage the teachers to take part in dialogue about inclusion with colleagues, share ideas, knowledge and techniques and be involved with problem solving regarding daily classroom issues.

2.   Creating a Collaborative School Culture. Under this heading, the authors cite six key skills necessary to create an environment for helping move a staff closer to the goal of a fully inclusive school: 1) building trust and rapport, 2) diagnosing the organization, 3) dealing with the collaborative process, 4) using resources, 5) managing work, and 6) building skills and confidence in others. (Bauer & Brown, 2001, p. 16)

3.   Collegial Climate. This climate is not created in a day, the authors say. Rather, it is created by the way the administrator, teachers and support staff reinforce and support the beliefs and assumptions about inclusion. This climate is also

reinforced by the principal doing simple things like buying doughnuts for the staff periodically, or sponsoring them to a conference.

4.   Shared Leadership. Simply, the teachers in an inclusive building are encouraged to become leaders. This means the principal must understand change and know that in order to run an inclusive school, he must empower the teachers to make their own decisions and support them in their new roles.

5.   Benefits and Outcomes of Inclusive Learning. There are multiple benefits from inclusive learning, including that students who are not identified as having special needs show increased scores on all work. Other tangible results include increased time on academic tasks, more frequent student feedback about classroom performance, reduced off-task and acting –out behavior problems, increased fluency in basic skills and increased rates of correct responses from students. (Bauer & Brown, 2001, p. 22)

6.   Social Outcomes. If run with a focus on students, an inclusive school can expect to see increases in areas of 1) self-concept, 2) social cognition, 3) acceptance of others, 4) advancement of individual principles, and 5) tolerance of human differences. (Bauer & Brown, 2001, p. 24)

Summary of *Adolescents and Inclusion: Transforming Secondary Schools*

In summary, this book describes an effectively inclusive high school and serves as an example of how inclusion may be made to work given a high school with a staff and administrators willing to accept and embrace the change inclusion can bring.

Review of *Support Networks for Inclusive Schooling: Interdependent Integrated Education*

In that same vein as *Adolescents and Inclusion*, authors Stainback and Stainback wrote *Support Networks for Inclusive Schooling: Interdependent Integrated Education* (1990). The book deals with issues of support networks for all educators and students, as well as broader based supports for and by families, administrators and community members.

The authors find issues such as collaborative teamwork and use of a support facilitator as the basis for their effective inclusive school. Among the personnel and services listed, these two are described as essential to "foster integrated schools and classrooms." (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 37)

A support facilitator is part of a larger network of support sometimes called an integration task force that is necessary when inclusion starts at a school and as inclusive practices continue. Essentially, the support facilitator is in charge of assisting and enhancing This support facilitator has numerous responsibilities include establishing a peer support committee, serving as a team teacher, curriculum analyst and working with families.

The model of collaborative teamwork is one where the educators are in, "a nonhierarchical relationship in which all team members are seen as equal contributors, each adding his or her own expertise or experience to the problem-solving process."(Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 96)

They cite Glasser's studies of children and adults that state we all have a need for power, love and belonging and that the inherent structure of the team provides these qualities for all members. They report that the use of collaborative teams in the development of programs for inclusive schools can lead to a sense of support and empowerment for students and teachers alike.

The authors and their contributors also suggest the key to success of an effective inclusive school lies more in the attitudes and perceptions of those in and around the school than with the practice of teaching in the classroom. The success is more of a

> "…perception of school as a microcosm of the larger community/society. If the goal of education is to teach children to function effectively and contribute positively to society as adults, then that society in all of its diversity must be reflected and experienced in the school setting."(Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 238).

The authors cover findings about social growth and teacher-student interactions with much the same results. What the students need and what the teachers are willing to provide are quite different. The implication of all this, according to the authors is that both sides need to exercise caution when stating expectations from the other and that feasibility is the key word. Without that achievability, the process of inclusion comes quickly apart. This is an easy pitfall for all educators to avoid in order to help create an effective inclusive school.

Each of the periodicals and books reviewed represent findings that have significant implications for what makes up an effective inclusive school. All of the literature reviewed had at its center, those common threads of evidence and assurance that inclusion has merits that apply to all students.

Summary of source materials for question three

As Pumpian, Fisher and Kennedy wrote at the end of chapter one in *Inclusive Middle Schools*, "Tremendous parallels exist between the needs for reform in general education and the needs in special education. Together, general and special educators can address historically limiting stereotypes and create service delivery systems that are culturally responsive and simultaneously address student achievement." (Kennedy and Fisher, 2001, p.13)

Inclusion Ideals

So, what is the origin of inclusion? There is some research from the 1970's that sketchily provided proof that inclusion-schooled students with disabilities have social gains when compared to their self-contained peers. Past that date, relevant research didn't begin until sometime in the early 1980's when some of the more prominent authors like Certo, Brinker, Stainback, Voeltz and others began to assert themselves through research that is still used today.

The bulk of research about inclusion and the laurels upon which many researchers and parents rest their confidence center around two types of gains students with disabilities make in the regular classroom: social and academic. The other key to understanding from whence the theory came is that none of the gains occur by simply placing a student with special needs in a regular classroom and standing back to watch those gains magically appear. The studies that substantiate growth in these students all point to continued training for the teachers and administrators for true success.

1. **Academic Gains**. Multiple studies have confirmed that students with disabilities served in an inclusive setting receive higher grades and do better on standardized achievement tests. Outcomes do vary by severity of disability. In one recent study, students who were served inclusively scored significantly better on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than their cross-town peers. Their better academic achievement was also highlighted by better grades (Rea, McLaughlin and Walther-Thomas, 2002).

2. **Behavioral Gains**. Although more research is in progress, some studies have been able to demonstrate that students with disabilities served inclusively have lower incidences of behavioral intervention than their self-contained peers. Again, outcomes vary by disability. Students with physical disabilities fare better than their learning disabled and

behavior disordered peers. It is also a common perception among teachers that students with disabilities behave more appropriately with non-disabled peers than with a peer group of disabled peers.

3. **Better attendance**. Rea, et al again found that students served inclusively attended more days than their self-contained peers. (p. 219) Generally, the assumption is that either through peer pressure to remain in school or through genuine desire to do so, students with and without disabilities tend to stay in school more often when they feel their time there is relevant and they feel they belong.

It should be noted that in these studies cited here, it was either noted or implied that staff at the schools where these studies took place received on-going training in inclusion practices. Also, the schools themselves were predominantly newer and the relative socio-economic status of the schools was quite high. This can have an effect on student's self-perceptions and could be a large contributor as to why the students did better academically and wanted to go to school more.

Self-Contained Philosophy

Inclusion is not the only way students with disabilities can get their education. Depending on need, some students with disabilities may receive instruction in a special class, or pull-out setting. In Iowa today, any student may be evaluated for consideration of special education services once a referral is made from a qualified person and parents or guardians agree to the process of review. That student then enters a period of problem solving before consideration for placement can be made. If problem solving is ineffective, the student will be tested to see if he/she qualifies for any sort of special needs services.

This is a simplified version of the actual process, but the point is that proponents of this model believe it has changed and evolved based on the needs of the students and the schools. It is designed to place those with needs in a place where additional help is available, but not mandated. No student ever *has to* take special needs classes.

The dilution of the special needs model occurs, proponents say, at the point at which the district insists the student be served in the regular classroom. A professional trained in the area of the student's disability, they continue, best meets the needs of student's disability outside the regular classroom. Those needs would include: behavioral, physical disability, extreme learning disability and some autism spectrum disorders.

At its most basic, the idea here is that a regular education teacher has neither the training nor the resources to deal with students with disabilities like those above, let alone attempt to help him learn appropriately. Students with these types of disabilities require specialized training from teachers, not lists of accommodations and questioning stares from peers. For students identified with behavior disorders, their needs are best met in a highly structured environment where social skills can be taught.

Further, those students with extreme learning disabilities need the structure of a self-contained class to reduce distractions and increase successful skills taught at instructional level, or the level at which the student can learn best.

Both physical disabilities and autism spectrum disorders present special challenges to the even well trained special needs teachers. Both can require tremendous amounts of adaptations to a physical environment and more one-to-one assistance than can be provided in the regular classroom.

Without a doubt, each student represents a challenge on any given day that can stretch the resources of any teachers, but students with disabilities like those mentioned above do so more than their non-disabled peers. Indeed, placing students like these in the regular classroom jeopardizes the learning of their peers, while the needs of those with disabilities can be more easily met in the self-contained classes, proponents say.

Chapter 3 – What are the implications for my school?

A Description of Inclusion at my school

At the middle school level in Waterloo Community Schools, inclusion takes the form of including most of the students most of the time. In order to properly defend that statement, a little background about special needs levels, how the service delivery is supposed to work and how it really works is necessary.

In Iowa, once a student is placed for services as a special needs student, he is assigned a level. The levels are: One – Students with mild disabilities that are seen collaboratively and may also be pulled out for special class instruction one or two periods. Two – Still termed mildly or moderately disabled, these students are seen for two or more pull-out subjects and are seen as significantly more disabled than their level one peers. Three – Usually termed severely or profoundly disabled, these students are sometimes taught in the public school setting, sometimes in a separate facility. These students are seen as significantly more disabled than their level two peers. They are taught almost entirely without inclusion into general education classes.

The majority of the students in the public school setting are level one with a few level two's and three's being served as well. These levels are relevant to this explanation of implications because in the resource/multicategorical model in which I teach, I mainly serve level one students. These students are also to be served inclusively, with collaborative needs written as service time into their IEP's.

As an example, let's say I have a student on my roster name Joe One. Joe is a level one student, identified and placed on my roster for services due to his disability in the areas of reading, written language and organization. Joe is seen by me for one period of pull-out skills

for assistance with those areas of identified discrepancy. He is also in a self-contained reading class, due to his inability to succeed in a general reading class.

However, also noted on Joe's IEP is that under service delivery, Joe has collaboration written in. That means that he is to be provided services by a special needs teacher in the regular language arts class as the setting, collaboratively. This means I am to be in Joe's language arts class with him every day to provide the modifications to his curriculum and assist him and all other students as needed.

How the service delivery is supposed to work is as follows:

So, in block A2 when Joe goes to language arts, I go with him. I stay in the class, listen to the initial presentation, assist the teacher in clarifying and presenting the material and circulate in the room helping all the students, including Joe. I may present part or all of the lesson myself, pull students including Joe to the back of the room for a re-teach of the lesson, administer a quiz by reading all the questions aloud or do whatever is listed on Joe's IEP as an accommodation.

As a collaborative teacher, I am responsible for enforcing Joe's IEP for language arts in the classroom. This is an important detail: When I am not able to provide his mandated collaborative instruction as written into the IEP, the duty of enforcing the accommodations falls to the classroom teacher. It is still my duty to see that the classroom teacher has all the tools he needs to adequately enforce the IEP.

How it really works is as follows:

I teach two periods of pull-out skills for my students because there are too many of them to teach in one period of skills and there are too many of them to be taught collaboratively. Instead of following Joe to his language arts class in that A2 block, I instead go and teach a pull-out math class. I also can't follow any of the other identified students into their classes for

mandated collaborative instruction because on any given day, I average approximately 60 minutes for collaboration. The rest of my day is spent teaching pull-out math and reading. Including my two skills classes, I teach five classes each day and I am expected to collaborate daily. For eight weeks, I had an extra section of math assigned to me bringing my total to six, not including collaboration. A full load for teachers in the middle school is five classes.

In fact, most resource teachers in the Waterloo district teach at least two periods of pull-out skills and one or more pull-out academic subjects. This schedule, in and of itself is not a bad thing. It becomes a bad thing when that pull-out academic occurs at the same time as mandated collaboration. I can't speak to how often this occurs with other resource teachers in Waterloo, but for me, I was completely unable to collaborate as mandated by the IEP.

So, inclusion at my school at the eighth grade level was virtually non-existent, with the exception of the 60 minutes daily when I was to collaborate. Within the school, there is a level two behavior disorders classroom, where all the students are taught in the general education setting for at least one period of inclusion. There is also a level two learning disability self-contained classroom, where all the students are taught inclusively for at least one period. There is another self-contained teacher who taught four separate self-contained courses and one section of skills. All of her students are taught inclusively for at least two periods a day.

Barriers to inclusion at my school

At my school, the largest barrier to inclusion is the lack of staff to effectively enforce inclusion. Given my schedule and that of the other resource teachers, another 1.5 staff persons were needed to teach the self-contained courses offered and support the collaborative model. With the additional staff, I would have been able to collaborate with all my students during at least part of their classes.

To be fair, another barrier is the number of students to be served in the eighth grade this year. I averaged 19 students on my roster during the year, with a peak of 20 for six weeks in the early fall. For comparison, the seventh grade resource teacher has 14 students on her roster and the sixth grade resource teacher has 16. They each teach one section of pull-out instruction.

Another barrier to inclusion at the school is, as identified by one author in this paper, a lack of acceptance of diversity on the part of the staff. The staff of eighth grade teachers referred to the special needs students on the team as "bothersome" and to me teaching collaboratively as "more of a distraction than anything". On a daily basis, only one teacher would involve me in the lesson. The others flatly refused to allow me access to their materials or curricula to allow me to collaborate effectively.

Another barrier to inclusion is the lack of expectations, awareness and training on the part of the general education staff for dealing with inclusion. First, Waterloo schools have never inserviced its staff with regards to expectations for teaching collaboratively or what form inclusion is to take at any grade level. So, the teachers have low expectations for what inclusion can mean to them in their classes. When I asked my administrator how I was supposed to teach collaboratively and what that meant at my building, his response was to "do the best I can" and that "your first responsibility is to those self-contained classes you teach. Inclusion comes second."

Second, teachers seem very unaware of what they should and could do with regards to inclusion and seem genuinely puzzled by the idea of having to make accommodations for students with special needs, even though they've been doing so for the last ten years. For example, when I approached teachers at the beginning of the year with lists of accommodations and questions about how lessons would be taught, the response was either, "hey, that's a good

idea" or "what am I supposed to do with these kids?". A few teachers wanted to sit down with me and make plans to co-teach for the year and when I explained my situation, they expressed either disbelief or dismay, but never support.

Third, the lack of inservicing by the district for the staff has created many of the barriers that currently exist. Waterloo schools have never formally inserviced the staff on the subject of inclusion or collaborative teaching practices. They have conducted inservices on differentiated instruction which mentioned inclusion and collaboration, but never addressed them directly. Many studies have documented successful inclusion model requires ongoing training and support including McNally, Cole and Waugh (p. 263), Kilgore, Griffin, Sindelar and Webb, Stainback and Stainback.

What needs to change to improve inclusion?

First and foremost, the district needs to adopt a plan and for implementation of inclusion and continued support and evaluation of the practices they put forth. This plan should be written and designed by administrators, teachers, parents and students. Most importantly, the plan must be sustained by the district at the building level. This will require communication, trust and continuous evaluation.

To enforce this plan, there should also be put in place a team to oversee the change process as the district moves toward a proper inclusion model. This team should consist of persons already associated with the building special needs team and may include persons from the University familiar with inclusion and collaborative teaching processes.

The district must then make a monetary commitment to support the plan with adequate resources. Adequate resources must be defined by local needs and ISEA or NEA standards, or

those put forth by the U.S. Department of Education. Adequate resources must include adequate staff and equal disbursement of building funds and supplies to support the defined inclusion plan.

Next, each staff member in the classrooms must take personal responsibility for educating all students all the time. When staff makes a commitment to teaching all students, implementation of an inclusion plan with collaborative teaching will be second nature.

Once these steps have been taken the building should also undertake an effort to help develop support for both teachers and students who may need help with the transition to a full inclusion model. These people may be the same ones who comprise the building support team overseeing change. It may be more beneficial to have individuals who are not associated with this team and are more clearly associated with other support networks, such as guidance counselors, parents and other professionals whose jobs include change and institutional change.

Last, as part of the district inservicing, they should revisit differentiated instruction and alternate ways of instructing for inclusion. These instructional strategies and plans should include some of the methods explored in this paper including class wide peer tutoring, use of graphic organizers and more activity-based learning that employs visual, kinesthetic and auditory input of information as well as alternate assessment methods and plans.

Given these elements, Waterloo schools and many other school districts will find themselves on the journey of inclusion. This is not a journey with a destination, but rather a journey in an of itself, constantly aware of its course and direction. The end result will be success reflecting the degree of sincerity with which the task is undertaken.

Chapter 4 – Conclusion/Author's Opinion

This paper posed the following questions:

1) What instructional methods promote and help make inclusion effective in a

collaborative classroom?

2) What prevents teachers from teaching effectively in inclusive schools?

3) What are the components of an effective inclusive school?

4) What are the implications for my school?

In chapter three, I review how inclusion was implemented in my district. In this chapter,

I present conclusions I have reached after some reflection.

How we perceive inclusion and instruction of students with special needs affects all

facets of the educational process, from teaching to playground duty. Everyone brings with them

a perception of what inclusion is and does – parents, teachers and students. Let's consider how

that perception affects the process of inclusion within my district.

Inclusion is a theory of both placement and process. As such, it garners praise and

criticism from a wide variety of legal, professional and parental advocates. Issues in education

involving placement and process often do. With inclusion, there are so many ideas and ideals

involved, the outcomes are difficult to predict. It is important to remember that inclusion is an

idea born from PL 94-142, and as such, it has inconsistencies that arise only during application.

So, the point of inconsistency lies more within the application of inclusion, rather than in the

theory itself.

Understanding local application is one goal I hope this paper has accomplished.

Currently, Waterloo schools treat inclusion like a prefabricated curriculum or an assessment

device. Once 'purchased' by the district, the feeling is that it can be left alone and do its job

without additional cost or energy. It is expected to solve problems, create new opportunities and make life for everyone that much easier. It is also expected to solve all the placement issues regarding students with disabilities by putting them into classrooms with their peers.

However, none of this magically happens in Waterloo and it doesn't happen anywhere else, either. All the literature reviewed here shows clearly the successful inclusion models work because they embrace it as change and deal with it daily as such. Inclusion solves no problems on its own and works best if it is regarded as an ongoing element of change that flexes as it needs to and does what it can for every student.

What inclusion can't do is solve all the placement issues for Waterloo or any other district. At best, placement of students must be fluid and must be the best situation for the student first and the school second. For example, a student with a learning disability may do well in an integrated class at the beginning of the year, but may wind up failing for the quarter due to circumstances. The special needs staff and their team must be able to recognize this and move accordingly to see that the IEP is being followed and then implement a change either on the accommodations in the IEP or consider a change in programming to facilitate success for that student.

A response to Chapter 3

Chapter three's topics were: Description of inclusion at my school, Barriers to inclusion at my school and what needs to change to improve inclusion?

In chapter three, I described inclusion at my school. Inclusion has been handled in a likewise fashion throughout the district at all grade levels. At one point this past year, I had a discussion with a top administrator of the district who told me Waterloo schools had a plan in motion several years ago to formally address inclusion to the teaching staff at the district level.

Then, the reading scores for the year came in and the district quickly abandoned its plan to deal with inclusion, instead embracing a set of standards aimed at increasing reading scores in the district. Inclusion may still be addressed at some point in the future, he added.

My feeling on this is that a tremendous opportunity was missed and that all students are still paying the price. The students are missing out on opportunities to learn from their peers with disabilities and they are missing out on the type of differentiated instruction that comes with inclusion and collaboration. The teachers are not yet trained to fully understand inclusion and teach to all students.

The opportunity to re-teach what inclusion is to the teachers and how it should work can be taken up at any point, but it should be done soon and it must be done with the idea that inclusion is an ongoing process for all parties involved. Once again, inclusion must be seen as a journey, not a destination.

I also wrote about barriers to inclusion at my school. I wrote that additional staff was needed to effectively enforce inclusion. A little more history may help flesh this out. In 1997, Waterloo schools stopped using the teaching pool provided by Area Education Agency 7 and hired teachers for the district to provide instruction to students with special needs. This change in pools has had a detrimental effect on how inclusion and all services to students with special needs are delivered.

Enrollment numbers have changed since that hiring pool shift, but basically the number of students with special needs has risen since then and the number of teachers used for delivering services for the district to those students has dropped. Also, the number of paraprofessionals hired and used by the district has been reduced by almost half. The end result is something quite

predictable: with fewer teachers and more students, the students are getting fewer services than before. The district is, however, saving a great deal of money on their special needs budget.

Finally, I wrote about what needs to change to improve inclusion. To be more direct, what the district needs to do is order each building to form its own committee that would be responsible for 1) working with administration on inclusion issues 2) communicating to staff how the inclusion issues will affect staff and students 3) clarifying how the concept of change must be a part of the inclusion issue everyday. Called the CHANGE MaICERS (change monitoring and inclusion clarifying each reform step), this committee would meet weekly to help ease the school into its inclusion plan and help establish the communication, planning and action needed to keep inclusion on track within the school.

Sadly, due to budget constraints, the committee would have to be entirely volunteer, but would be most effective if made up of administrators, teachers, parents and students. The best support an administrator could give a committee like this would be to grant the team members an extra planning period one day a week to meet and deal with the issues having to do with inclusion.

Recommendations

Certainly, opinion is what most of the arguments about inclusion contain. Opinion is what I've been avoiding adding throughout this paper. Locally, inclusion isn't as hot a topic as it could be, but it does garner its own kind of following each year, often driven by problems that arise in Waterloo's informal inclusion environment. Parents who speak of inclusion unfortunately do so when a crisis is reached. Are there ways to avoid further crises?

Training, training, training. In the business world, the primary reason a business succeeds is, as the saying goes, location, location and location. In education, location doesn't mean much, but if you are in a district where training occurs for inclusion, it means a lot. The educational extension of that saying is training, training, training. If you have a dedicated teaching staff, once they are trained in a practice like inclusion, they will doubtlessly make it their own and help it succeed. There are certainly those teachers that take personally their charge to include all learners to the point of success without training. For the rest, there is training. Accommodations don't have to be as elaborate, but they must be thorough and flexible enough to give all learners a voice.

Time as an important factor. Any special needs teacher who has taught self-contained class for a number of years can tell you: The longer students know each other, the more mutually destructive their behavior can be. While certainly not true in all cases, when a group of students goes to the same self-contained classes through elementary school and beyond, their familiarity with one another can create profound behavior issues. Reducing the amount of time these students spend together can lessen those behavior issues. Mixing students into general education classes breaks that familiarity cycle and puts pressure on the misbehaving student to act like his peers. This can create great learning opportunities for all students involved.

Plant the seeds for making inclusion work at its source: The teachers. If enrolled today, a student at the three state universities in Iowa looking to graduate as a classroom teacher has to take only one class about students with special needs. This one class is an overview course and does not deal with specific characteristics of disabilities, nor are strategies for having students with disabilities offered. As elaborated in this review of literature, strategies are a major

part of instruction for all students, not just those with disabilities (Bauer and Shea, 2002; Speece and Keough, 1996).

This is simply not enough to make a beginning teacher competent enough to deal with the issues a student with special needs brings to the classroom.

To correct this problem means a fundamental shift in how we look at training teachers. For inclusion to truly work, it must be discussed in each teaching preparatory class so as to make beginning teachers understand that all students learn differently, not just those with special needs. Teaching effectively means keeping that in mind at all times. Beginning teachers should have to take more than one course about students with special needs: It should be a course about the dealing with all types of learners in the classroom and the hallways. Other issues like behavior management and curricular modifications must be addressed to beginning teachers as well.

Wrap up

So, inclusion, which began as an implication in PL 94-142, now draws the attention of many authors, teachers and parents. The "lease restrictive environment" phrase from that legislation leads me to the following simple conclusion:

So many of the strategies mentioned in the research of this paper produce real results. Classwide peer tutoring, thoughtful reading strategies that can be individually tailored and mnemonics for remembering those strategies do work. I've seen them work and use a number of them everyday while instructing all students. Still, the weight of their worth comes down to how well the teacher does his job everyday.

In fact, all successes and failures of teaching come down to that basic fact. If a teacher struggles with the basics of how to teach, the results will be poor at best. A good teacher,

committed to seeing that every student learns is practicing the best kind of inclusion: when all students learn, we all reap rewards down the road.

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