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Requirements for a successful full inclusion program

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Requirements for a successful full inclusion program

Abstract

This research paper titled "Requirements For A Successful Inclusion Program", is a study of full inclusion programs. The introduction covers the history and early laws involving special education. The purpose of the study was to determine the requirements for a successful full inclusion program. There were four questions asked in the study. 1. What are teachers attitudes about full inclusion? 2. What types of children are most effectively included in a full inclusion program? 3. What are the benefits and concerns of parents whose children are in regular and special education classrooms involving a full inclusion program? 4. What types of resources do teachers, parents, or students need for full inclusion to be successful? The need for the study, the limitations of the study, and definitions of the study are included. Chapter II involves a review of the literature, starting with advantages of full inclusion. This section includes the benefits for teachers, students, and parents. Chapter III states the reasons against full inclusion. It lists teachers negative attitudes, student concerns, and parent concerns. This chapter also gives resources for teachers, students and parents. Summary, conclusions and recommendations are found in Chapter IV. This touches on the basic questions asked at the beginning of the paper and is followed by answers: What are the teachers' attitudes about full inclusion? What types of children are best included in a full inclusion program? What do parents think and feel about their children being in a full inclusion program? What types of resources do teachers, parents, or students need for full inclusion to be successful? There are four conclusions drawn by the researcher from the literature reviewed in the paper.

Requirements For A Successful Full Inclusion Program

**A Graduate Review
Submitted to the
Division of Early Childhood Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by
Amy Coombs-Lindsey
May 1, 1995**

This Research Paper by: Amy Coombs-Lindsey

Titled: Requirements For A Successful Full Inclusion Program

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the degree of Master of Arts (or Master of Arts in Education).

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The need for the study, the limitations of the study, and definitions of the study are included. Chapter II involves a review of the literature, starting with advantages of full inclusion. This section includes the benefits for teachers, students, and parents.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The current buzz-word on the education front is inclusion. Full inclusion is the belief that all children (gifted, at risk, physically, emotionally, and profoundly handicapped) should be included for all or part of the day in a regular classroom setting and should have their needs met in this classroom (Horn, 1993).

This integrated program differs from a segregated system. A segregated system is one that provides educational services in rooms separate from rooms where services for nonhandicapped students are being provided. "Segregation has been perpetuated in part by the notion that schools can teach only some students effectively as opposed to the conviction that all students can learn " (Alper & Ryndak, 1992, p.375).

Support for the integration of students with handicaps can be traced to early laws involving special education. The beginning of special education happened in 1954 with the passage of P.L. 83-531, the *Cooperative Research Act*. This Act brought about an awareness of a need for aid for special education (Barbacovi, & Clelland, 1977, p.2). In 1958 there were two more bills passed that focused on the training of personnel in the area of mental retardation. The Division of Handicapped Children and Youth was established in 1963 under

P.L. 88-164. This Division brought together all the previous acts and units which were set up to serve handicapped children. Major changes in public laws kept occurring from January of 1970 to November of 1975. During that time sixty-one bills were passed that directly pertained to the handicapped. With P.L. 93-380, The Education Amendments of 1974, Congress authorized assurances of an education in the least restrictive environment. A year later, on November 29, 1975, President Ford signed into law the *Education For All Handicapped Children Act*, public law 94-142. This law determines how federal monies are channeled to states. It assures that all handicapped children will have a free and appropriate public education. The crux of that law which pertains to this paper, is the provision: "To the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children... are [to be] educated with children who are not handicapped...[PL 94-142] (National School Public Relations Association, 1980, p.6).

Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the requirements for a successful full inclusion program. Four pertinent questions need to be addressed in order to achieve the purpose of this paper.

- 1.What are teachers attitudes about full inclusion?

2. What types of children are most effectively included in a full inclusion program?
3. What are the benefits and concerns of parents whose children are in regular and special education classrooms concerning a full inclusion program?
4. What types of resources do teachers, parents, or students need for full inclusion to be successful?

Need For The Study

Education today is a system where large numbers of students have either failed or have been segregated into special education classrooms. Danielson and Bellamy, (1989), observed the following:

Data reported by states for the 1985-86 school year show that approximately 6% of special education students (4,800 students per million same-aged resident population) receive their education in segregated day or residential schools. An additional 24% of special education students are educated in separate classes. Nearly 27,000 students per million on resident population receive services in ...separate classes, segregated day or residential schools. (Danielson, and Bellamy, 1989, p.452)

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) purports that all students, whether or not they have been identified as having handicaps, should be educated together (Alper, & Ryndak, 1992, p.374). Furthermore, this position is supported by many educators and parents who believe that no child should be segregated when it comes to learning (Smelter, Rasch, Yudewitz, 1994).

Limitations Of The Study

The limitations of this literature study about full inclusion are restricted because of the lack of information available in the libraries found in the community and surrounding areas available to this researcher. The research that was found includes too many articles on the advantages of inclusion and not many on the disadvantages of inclusion. There are no long-term studies at this point that deal with the effects of all students that are involved in an inclusion program.

"We don't know what the long-term effects are. We have had mainstreaming for more than 15 years, but in mainstreaming disabled students' progress was always [sic] being monitored by special education teachers" (Shanker, 1994, p. 314).

Definitions Of The Study

The terms used in this paper are defined in the following ways:

Co-teaching--This is often used as team teaching. Two teachers plan lessons and deliver instruction together, sharing responsibility for assessing student achievement (Friend, & Cook, 1992).

Full Inclusion--

All students, including those who have been labeled severely and profoundly mentally and physically disabled, chronically disruptive, gifted, or at risk, are accepted, included as equal members, recognized for what they have to offer to the school community, and provided an appropriate educational program and any necessary supports needed for them to be successful learners. (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p. xi)

Inclusion Classroom--where all students are treated fairly and equally by all others involved within the inclusion classroom (Stainback, and Stainback, 1992). In addition, it is a classroom in which all children are integrated together.

Inclusive Schools--The education of all students in neighborhood classrooms (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p.3).

Individualized education program, (IEP)--means a

...written statement for each handicapped child developed in a meeting by a representative of the local educational agency or an intermediate education unit who shall be qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, and specially designed instruction, to meet the unique needs of the handicapped child... . (National School Public Relations Association, 1977, p.13)

Integrate--"To end the segregation of and bring into common and equal membership in society or an organization" (Woolf, 1977, p.600).

Regular Class-- includes students who receive a majority of their education in a regular class and receive special education and related services for less than 21% of the school day (McLeskey, & Pacchiano, 1994, p.510).

Regular Education Initiative(REI)--"This movement calls for a shared responsibility between regular and special education in addressing the needs of students with disabilities in typical classroom settings" (McLeskey, & Pacchiano, 1994, p.509).

Separate Class-- includes students who receive special education and related services for more than 60% of the school day (McLeskey, & Pacchiano, 1994, p.510).

Special Education--specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, meeting the unique needs of a

handicapped child. This would be including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction and instruction in hospitals and institutions (National School Public Relations Association, 1977, p.12).

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Arguments for Full Inclusion

"Special education was developed over a century ago to meet the instructional needs of students considered exceptional or special" (Stainback, & Stainback, 1984, p.102). There have been two basic types of education since that time: education for exceptional students, and education for regular students.

There recently has been controversy over the effectiveness of pull-out programs such as resource rooms for the education of mildly handicapped students. The reform movement of Regular Education Initiative, (REI), has been initiated in many states, and is bringing about change in classrooms.

Regular Education Initiative proponents claim that the best way to meet the needs of all students, is to put all students back into the regular classroom. This is known as an inclusive classroom. "Classrooms in inclusive schools are organized heterogeneously and staff and students are encouraged and empowered to support one another" (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p.7). The philosophy in the inclusive classroom is one in which all children will be integrated together in classrooms. This philosophy is based on the idea that diversity is valued, and it is believed that diversity strengthens the class, offering all of

its members a greater opportunity for learning (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p.8).

Because the goal of full inclusion is to include all children, it signifies the end of special education classes as we currently know them. This does not end the need for supports and services that must be provided in these integrated classrooms.

Stainback and Stainback (1992), have stated "... everyone benefits from inclusive schools" (p.6) . These schools do not focus on special students, but rather on all students. If all of the resources and efforts of school personnel can be spent on assessing instructional needs, adapting instruction, and providing support to students, then all students would benefit (p.6).

Teachers Attitudes and Roles

Teachers' roles change in inclusive classrooms. The role of the independent teacher changes into the role of a team member. Schattman and Benay (1992) have stated that the team member "... provides direct instruction, consults with other team members, supervises paraprofessionals, and coordinates related services. Teachers in integrated schools also participate in training colleagues" (p.25).

Relationships between staff members in a building change as well. The principal and teacher relationship is critical to the

success of inclusion. Principals are the leaders within the school that encourage teachers to take risks (Wheelock, 1992, p.8). Principals help teachers become motivated to obtain knowledge about inclusion, to find educational support routes, and to promote self-assessment .

Classroom teachers recognize that commitment, the willingness to experiment, and involvement in planning for inclusion are important to success. "Teachers must be involved in reviewing research, designing grouping alternatives, selecting or developing approaches, and communicating with parents" (Wheelock, 1992, p. 28). The result is that co-teaching is done in many inclusion classrooms.

Co-teaching involves two teachers who plan lessons, deliver instruction together, and share the responsibility for assessing students' mastery of skills. Teachers feel more comfortable working together if training, feedback, and additional services are available to both the special education and regular education teacher (NEA Today).

Student Benefits

Several authors have observed that students benefit from inclusion. For example, the following statement appeared in the 1977 National School Public Relations Association Journal:

Successful advancement of students in an inclusion classroom depends heavily upon the regular classroom teacher's ability to do the following: (a) Recognize their learning deficiencies; (b) determine appropriate methods for correcting them; and (c) find the time and resources to put planned methods into practice. (p.78)

A teacher at Westerly, Rhode Island says of her inclusion classroom: "Our students don't really know which of us is the special education teacher and which of us is the regular education teacher, even more important, our students often don't know who the special needs students is[sic]" (NEA p. 17).

Students involved in inclusion benefit from high expectations. Rather than assume that only some students need extra help, help is offered to all students. When the consultant enters the classroom to help the students who require an Individualized Education Plan, (IEP), other students can work with the consultant as well. If education systems can consolidate all curricular offerings in one unified system, all students can be provided a broader range of curricular choices with less wasted effort (Stainback, & Stainback, 1984).

Through full inclusion, " ... special education students avoid the stigma associated with daily journeys in and out of the regular classroom" (Friend, & Cook, 1992, p.30). Their learning is less fragmented. When special educators and regular educators bring their efforts together and pool their resources,

adjustments can be made to the regular education curriculum to meet the particular learning needs and characteristics of all students (Espey, Barks, & Dahms-Stinson, 1989).

Madeleine C. Will, Assistant Secretary for the office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, in 1986 made a speech that eluded to the fact that

the pull-out approach [has] failed to meet the educational needs of these students. She also argued that pull-out programs often stigmatize students placed in such programs, resulting in lowered expectation and a focus on failure rather than prevention... .(cited in Coates, 1989, p.532)

Parental Benefits

Inclusive schooling to parents means that their child will receive an education that sometimes is reserved for students who only have the correct label. Their child will have access to

... reading specialists, Title I , counselors, physical and speech therapists, school psychologists, other classroom teachers, math and science consultants, and others to provide suggestions or work in the classroom to make it more feasible and adaptive to the unique needs of all students . (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p.13)

Special education parents will eventually understand that an inclusive classroom supports and offers assistance to help their child succeed in achieving appropriate curriculum objectives. When that happens they will uphold the decision to place their child in a full inclusion classroom.

CHAPTER III
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
Arguments Against Full Inclusion

There are some allegations that full inclusion is not the best education for all children. These people believe that, if we practice full inclusion in the school many disabled children will lose out. "The Learning Disabilities Association of America does not support 'full inclusion' or any policies that mandate the same placement, instruction, or treatment for *ALL* students with learning disabilities" (NDA Newsbrief, 1993, p.594).

Another learning disabilities organization that does not support full inclusion is the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD). This committee believes that when full inclusion is defined as the idea that all students with learning disabilities will be served in regular education classrooms, this " violates the rights of parents and students with disabilities as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)" (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1993, p.596).

Smelter, Rasch, and Yudewitz (1994), have theorized:

inclusionists generally use three main arguments to substantiate their case: (a) that all children learn best in the regular education classroom..., (b) that the goal of

social equity that is met by keeping children mixed with their peers is of greater importance than how much children learn, or (c) that pullout programs are a violation of the civil rights of children with special needs because they segregate them from their peers. (p.36,37)

The arguments: (a) children learn better in a regular classroom, (b) that children who are mixed with their peers are more important than how much the children are learning, and (c) that segregating children is a violation of their civil rights is refuted by Smelter, Rasch and Yudewitz (1994). They believe the problem with believing these arguments are the following: (a) Research supports the notion that children learn best in small groups. (b) Social aspects of education may not be more important than the academic aspects. (c) Children with special needs may also have a constitutional right to be in a special classroom. This makes the third argument of pullout programs a violation of the civil rights of children with special needs by being segregated from their peers, a direct conflict with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) (1994, p.37).

Teachers Negative Attitudes Concerning Inclusion

Baker and Zigmond (1990) found that it was not feasible for teachers to make adaptations. Most often teachers' time was devoted to teaching the curriculum; very little time was spent on individualized instruction. Teachers cared about children and

were conscientious about their jobs but their mindset was conformity, not accommodation.

Some teachers have reported that regular education students are missing out on individual assistance from teachers. Most of the teacher's time and energy goes to serve the special education students (Baines, Baines & Masterson, 1994, p.62).

Many teachers agree that inclusion has an impact on how and what they teach. Expectations are lowered and teachers are not sure what they can and cannot do to modify behavior of special education students. They feel they spend a great deal of time handling discipline problems (Baines, et al, 1994, p.62).

In this time of financial savings, special education classrooms are being dismantled and special needs students are being assigned to regular classes. Consequently, these classes are increasing in size; classrooms that were once 25 are now five to ten students larger. Also, teacher's aides are being eliminated as a further cost-saving measure.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has taken the position that inclusion will become the placement for all students with disabilities into regular education classrooms without regard to the nature or severity of the disability of the student. The AFT's position is that children are placed without regard to their ability to behave and function appropriately in a regular classroom. There is no attention given to the impact that

inclusion has on the other students in the classroom (Shanker, 1994, p.314).

Students Concerns

The effect of inclusion on students is revealed in a study by Deno, Maruyama, Espin and Cohen (1990). In their examination of student differences in achievement, they found special education students did relatively poorly in both integrated and resource programs when compared with their low-achieving classmates (p.161).

Not only has the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) expressed concerns about the impact of full inclusion on teachers but they have also expressed a concern regarding its impact on students. Shanker expressed this concern in the following statement: " In each case, we need to ask what is the impact of a particular placement on the child who has a disability, and we also have to ask what is the impact on all the others in the class" (Shanker, 1994, p.315).

Parental Concerns

Parents report that people making decisions about their children's education do not know their child, or have a child with a disability themselves that they can relate to the decision being made. Rose and Smith (1993) found that some respondents

report that parents of both (a) typically developing children and (b) children with disabilities were concerned that integration could have a negative effect on the services children receive. The other concern was that children with disabilities would take up too much of the time and attention of the classroom teacher.

Resources For Inclusion

The National Education Association has cited items essential to any inclusion program. The items cited were the following: (a) full continuum of placement options and services, (b) appropriate professional development for all staff, (c) adequate time during a normal school day for staff members to engage in coordinated and collaborative planning on behalf of all students, (d) class sizes that are responsive to students needs, (e) staff and technical assistance available to staff members and students (NEA).

An important resource for teachers is staff development. Staff development treats teachers as professionals who have something to contribute, and who want to stay current on issues in their field. Training for teachers is not only to provide information, but to dispel fear of a full inclusion classroom. It needs to share information on the special needs population, to encourage discussion sessions about common ground, and to provide site visits to other schools. Workshops are also a

resource that can help an inclusion school district; they can offer help with crisis intervention, curriculum modifications, team building skills, and reality therapy.

Other resources that are available to classroom teachers are the specialists in their district, these specialists include the following: Title I teachers, counselors, physical therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, consultants, and others who provide new ways to help all students in the classroom.

Still another resource that is available to teachers is a visitation to another inclusion school. These visits should be for the purpose of assessing what programs could be incorporated into their school.

Student Resources

"Inclusive classrooms tend to foster *natural* support networks. There is an emphasis on peer tutoring, buddy systems, circles of friends, cooperative learning, and other ways of connecting students in natural, ongoing, and supportive relationships" (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p.9).

A full inclusion program needs to be tailored to each student. In these classes students should have options, such as flexible schedules and extended days on or off site. In addition to these options, a full inclusion classroom should have more

than one teacher. The instructional team should consist of a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, and an instructional aide.

Parental Resources

Resource parents are parents who have had experience with full inclusion in another setting. These parents can help in the new setting by providing special skills they have developed previously.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to review the literature to determine the requirements for a successful full inclusion program. Four questions were asked:

1. What are the teachers' attitudes about full inclusion?
2. What types of children are most effectively included in a full inclusion program?
3. What are the benefits and concerns of parents whose children are in regular and special education classrooms concerning a full inclusion program?
4. What types of resources do teachers, parents, or students need for full inclusion to be successful?

What Are The Teachers' Attitudes About Full Inclusion?

Teachers seem to be hesitant about full inclusion in their classrooms. They understand that the goal of full inclusion is to treat all children equally, and that all children are to be accepted as capable of learning (Stainback, & Stainback, 1992, p. 8).

Teachers see their role as changing; some teachers have difficulty with this change. These professionals know the

benefits of a full inclusion school. The hesitancy of some educators concerning full inclusion seems to be a result of their concern about the extra time and effort required to study, plan and develop curriculum to meet the needs of every child. The hesitancy also involves knowledge that districts do not always provide the fullest support for implementing a new program. A common concern is that there are not enough support systems, staff development meetings, and inservice sessions available before a program of full inclusion begins.

In schools where teachers succeeded in inclusion, their attitude was favorable. Teachers have had the most success with mainstreaming special education students in cases where class sizes were small and there were only one or two non violent special education students per class (Baines, Baines & Masterson, 1994).

What Types Of Children Are Best Included In A Full Inclusion Program?

Special students who benefit most from a regular classroom environment are those students who have been designated through an IEP that the regular education classroom is the least restrictive environment for them. These students have demonstrated that they can function in a regular education classroom.

There are statutory and regulatory requirements which delineate the provisions for full equality of opportunity for handicapped children. Requirements that state: "Appropriate education opportunities for handicapped children should be based on the ability to identify, assess, provide, and evaluate educational services based on the unique needs of each handicapped child" (Barbacovi & Clelland, 1977, p.7).

Barbacovi and Clelland (1977), also state that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children should be educated with children who are not handicapped. Removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment should only occur when the nature or severity of the handicap interferes and learning cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the regular education classroom.

What Do Parents Think And Feel About Their Children Being In A Full Inclusion Program?

Parents of special education and parents of regular education children have concerns that their children will not benefit from a full inclusion program. Both groups of parents have concerns that inclusion will have negative effects on the services their children receive. The parents of regular education children are concerned that children with disabilities will require extra amounts of the classroom teacher's time. While the

parents of special education children are concerned that their children will not be given time and attention in the regular education classroom. Both groups of parents also are concerned that they will have a loss of control over their child's education. In addition, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed for each child may require more time and effort by the classroom teacher. Parents of regular education students fear the IEP requires more time and effort on the part of the teacher to meet the requirements for special students, thus taking classroom time away from their regular education student. Parents of special education students fear their child will not receive the specialized services that the child receives in a special education classroom.

What Types Of Resources Do Teachers, Parents, Or Students Need For Full Inclusion To Be Successful?

Resources need to begin with continuing inservice training not only for teachers, but administrators, instructional assistants, parents, and all other staff members who are in contact with inclusion students (NEA Today, 1994, p.16). This helps build staff support of a full inclusion program. Reading professional articles, visiting with other inclusion school staff members, and visiting other schools that have implemented the inclusion program are beneficial professional development activities that

help staff become more accepting and comfortable with the inclusion program.

Calling upon specialists such as counselors, therapists, and consultants is another way to add resources for the teacher. There is also a need to evaluate the elements of the program on a regular basis. A survey needs to be sent to the participants; it should be evaluated so all can see the success rate, and work together on the trouble areas.

Students also need the support of counselors, therapists, and consultants. Students in the inclusion classroom may become dependent upon the relationships that form within that setting. This social setting is, therefore, a great benefit to the handicapped child.

Parent resources include other people, and especially other parents who have had previous experiences with full inclusion classrooms. Parents need to be included in the education of their children; they must be ready when their children reach a full inclusion classroom.

Open communication with parents is essential. The parents of special education students need to know how their child will participate and learn in a regular education classroom. This is much more important than finding out limitations of the student (NEA Today, 1994, p.17).

If the resources are all in place by the time a handicapped child reaches the regular classroom, the teacher and students can develop realistic attitudes and expectations overcoming the difficulties they may encounter.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the literature reviewed in this paper :

1. Schools and people associated with inclusion classrooms and schools will need to make a commitment to provide all the children in the classroom with the support they need.
2. Educators must work together as equal partners to provide learning opportunities for all students, working together to decide when and how to make adaptations for those students who need special services. Educators must determine how to adapt learning opportunities without adversely affecting the education experience of the regular education student.
3. Schools that participate in inclusion programs have different comfort levels. Schools do not change overnight. They may extend learning opportunities to all, or some, students, offer innovations in curriculum and instruction, encourage learning , and identify sources for support and assistance to those students that qualify.

4. Inclusion will not work unless adequate resources, learning processes, and staff development opportunities are in place.

Inclusion can only be considered successful if it is done in a thoughtful way; careful consideration must be given to the support that is needed in order to insure success. "When improperly carried out, inclusion efforts can and sometimes do lead to enormous frustration, pain, and anger on the part of everyone involved," says NEA Vice-President Robert Chase (NEA Today, 1994, p.16).

The law deems it necessary that public education be free, and appropriate. The law also requires that education be in the least restrictive environment. Educators will need to look at each student's needs carefully before deciding if an inclusion classroom will benefit that individual.

Recommendations

Based upon this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Workshops, staff development meetings and inservice sessions must be available before, during and after the program of full inclusion begins.

2. Class-size must remain small and manageable for the teacher. Teacher aides must be considered for rooms where

the student-teacher ratios are greater, or where special needs students are considered more *behavior-disordered*.

3. Parents must be considered in the placement of their children. Informational meetings should be held, informational letters mailed to the homes of participating students, and a provisions made for parents to opt-out if they choose.

4. Planning time should be provided by the district; it should allow teachers to do the following: plan and make adjustments and changes to meet the Individual Education Plan for the students with special needs, meet with support staff, or to write notes and observations needed for assessing students in the program.

5. The school district must assess each individual IEP, placing that student in the classroom which is the least restrictive environment for the individual child.

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