4

Key Lessons Learned About Inclusion

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It was late October, and the air was cool. An unexpected change in the daily schedule

cational services in settings apart from their peers without disabilities. But this story also gives us a glimpse of new opportunities available to teachers and students without disabilities. Students have real opportunities to experience and celebrate human diversity, use their creative powers to solve real challenges, and exert a positive influence on the community known as their classroom community. Similarly, teachers have new opportunities to teach a wide range of important social, affective, and problem-solving skills; model constructive ways to cope with change and new situations; and demonstrate that they are learners too!

In class after class, school after school, observations of successful inclusion reveal teachers and students creating ways of making it work (Baumgart, 1992; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco (1994)**;** Meyer. Ferguson. & Baumgart, 1992; Salisbury, Palombaro, & Hollowood, 1993; Schattman & Benay, 1992; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 1994; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainbeck, 1992). These many positive examples of inclusion in classrooms of the 1990s have been made possible by two decades of advocacy, policy making and curricular/instructional efforts of people working to achieve a common goal – that the lives of children in our public schools will be better as a result of our schooling practices. These efforts have also been advanced through litigation that continues to affirm that the basic civil rights and tenets of our society must be extended to all people, including those with the most severe disabilities.

This chapter discusses two key legal cases and their legal precedents in the movement toward greater inclusion of students with the most severe disabilities. Following this, the chapter introduces the "socio-relations" perspective and its relation to policies and practices to guide educators in the Inclusion movement. The chapter concludes with the presentation of seven key lessons learned as we explore the move toward inclusion-oriented education and related school reform. Each of these three areas serves as a reminder that previous assumptions have changed and that much remains to be learned as the school improvement process continues and expands.

LEGAL PRECEDENTS FOR INCLUSION AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Although numerous legal cases have addressed the rights of students with disabilities, we have selected two for discussion here. The first case, *Timothy W. v. Rochester, New Hampshire, School District*, (1989), reaffirmed the rights of students with the most severe disabilities to a

free and appropriate education. The second case, *Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District* (1993), set legal precedents for inclusion of students with severe disabilities and addressed numerous arguments that were previously viewed as barriers to inclusion for students with severe disabilities. The discussion is based, in part, on the work of Laski, Gran, and Boyd (1993) on *Timothy W.* and that of Martin (1993) on the *Oberti* case.

The case of *Timothy W.* arose when, in 1980, a school district in Now Hampshire refused to provide educational services to Timothy W. based on its assessment that his disabilities would prevent him from receiving any benefit from educational services. Timothy, a 13-year-old with multiple disabilities; including what was labeled as profound mental retardation, was refused educational services and other services by the Rochester school district. The district concluded that Timothy was not capable of benefiting from an education because he was too severely disabled to learn. Eventually, the district placed him in a 3-hour-per-day "diagnostic/ prescriptive" program, but continued to deny Timothy any "educational" placement.

Family and experts continued to assert Timothy's ability to learn and his right to benefit from an educational program under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act

few individualized education program (IEP) goals, curricular modifications, or supplemental supports were provided in the kindergarten program.

Raphael had difficulty in the kindergarten class and was considered disruptive. At the end of the school year, school district personnel proposed placement in a special education class for students with mental retardation – a placement that would require Raphael to be bused beyond the boundaries of his local school district. His parents requested a placement within a regular classroom in their neighborhood school.

In May 1993, the U.S Court of Appeals for the Third District unanimously affirmed a federal district court ruling that Raphael

SOCIO-RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

In these legal cases, the focus was on the rights of students with disabilities to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. In both cases the logic that excluded students from educational and/or regular class settings was the notion that these students were "inherently different" and therefore were not covered by equal protection

chronological age fearing teachers would "Just be writing an IEP that fit the classroom rather than the student." The perspectives of the special education teachers are summarized as follows:

> I can see how inclusion can work for my students in one class at Grade 3 and one class at Grade 4, but the other classrooms... I don't know. It seems like [I will] make the *kid* fit the classroom and [fit] into those other classes. Is this what inclusion really is going to end up being? What if the kid doesn't fit? What do they do when the students [without disabilities] are just working on worksheet after worksheet? It seems like she would learn more if I pulled her out and really fit the curriculum to her needs.

The group struggled with the need to write IEPs based on a student's individual needs and with the difficulties they encountered in doing so within general class settings. The needs of a particular student, Adam, were mentioned as an example of the seemingly impossible task of writing an appropriate IEP and placing Adam in fourth grade. In Adam's school there was one fourth grade and one fourth grade teacher. The special education teacher working with Adam expressed her concern about Adams not fitting in well in this classroom. She explained that his social and communication needs would not be met there, and placement in this classroom would detract from his present abilities. She predicted that Adam would become a "behavior problem."

Adam's teacher described this fourth grade: The students spend considerable time at their desks listening to the teacher and/or working on worksheets. This classroom is described in more detail under Traditional Approaches in Table 1.

After 30 more minutes of discussing Adam's needs, one elementary teacher asked, "Is this the only student who needs something

a focus on differences and his right to have the same placement as his fourth grade peers, that made his placement seem problematic. The perplexity was confounded by the assumption that this fourth grade class should remain the same and that only Adam had unmet needs in this traditional classroom

The group came to an understanding that inclusion was not, as earlier envisioned, "fitting Adam into this classroom" or teaching him elsewhere. As educators began to restructure the fourth grade classroom, they began to see how Adam's needs for active participation with objects and functional learning were needs he had in common with other students.

A New Perspective on Differences

The socio-relations perspective designs policies and programs by focusing on the needs people have in common as members of the same social category rather than differences between people. In the case of Adam, it was used to design a placement, curriculum, and instruction based on the associated needs of fourth graders. It is remarkably distinct from the differences /same rights perspective as a way of designing policies and services. Scholars in the area of policy reform (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Minnow, 1990; Sarason, 1982, 1990; Skrtic, 1991) discuss the conflicts and stigmas that result when programs,

ciation v. Guerra (1987). At issue in the case was whether the federal ban against discrimination on the basis of gender allows treating pregnant women like other workers or whether it allows special treatment. Granting maternity leave on the basis of gender differences would result in a special privilege and possible stigmas (women may be considered "too different" for the job).

mildly educationally disabled, at risk, homeless, unmotivated), did not have to leave the room and get "different stuff" to learn and connect with school and classmates Adam still has disabilities, but their social significance in terms of "different" was diminished when the associated needs of all students were considered.

Social arrangements, traditional approaches, and accompanying assumptions and norms often emphasize differences and make these differences matter. Reconceptualizing beyond the "one size fits all" approach can reduce the social significance of differences. These teachers learned that two questions – "What does Adam need?" and "Is this a need for any other student?" – refocused the problem toward the need for classroom change, school reform, and collaboration.

Those who work in schools, prepare teachers, and/or engage in school reform realize that reconceptualizing and collaborating can be challenging. What this section has tried to make more salient is that meeting the challenge requires an understanding of inclusion as more than a special education or disability issue. The work of school reform remains demanding, but options are unnecessarily limited when efforts and directions are set within old paradigms and assumptions (Brandt, 1993; Cuban, 1989; Goodlad, 1984; Harding, 1987; Schlechty, 1990; Skrtic, 1991).

Some directions to guide inclusive classroom reform efforts are offered in the next section. Each is based on lessons learned when traditional approaches to schooling are challenged and replaced with more inclusion-oriented practices.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Within schools across the United States, educators are rethinking basic assumptions of what, why, and how to teach. The process of questioning and trying "new" things has opened up possibilities for teachers, students, and their families. Here are some of the things we have learned from school stakeholders-teachers, students, families, administrators, and other school personnel:

Lesson 1: In order to provide quality inclusive education for students, we must have an ever-developing vision of how students' lives will improve because the students attend our schools.

Selection of curricular content and other school experiences should be related to individually determined and valued life out-comes, reflecting a healthy balance between the academic/ functional and social/ personal aspects of schooling (Giangreco,

students in the selection of goals and their outcomes. Current elementary and secondary education reforms refer to essentially these same parameters as "authentic learning," "performance-based outcomes," and "school-parent partnerships." Numerous school changes in which partnerships and an enlarged curricular basis have enhanced learning and preparedness for the future are discussed in the literature and documented for students, including those with severe or profound disabilities, within the federal and district reform agendas (Lightfoot, 1978; Smith, Hunter, & Schrag, 1991). Reconceptualizing what, how, and why we teach is a large part of improving schools and the process of implementing inclusive classrooms.

Lesson 2: Although inclusive education may be promoted by the needs of student with disabilities, inclusive education Is not a "disability" issue.

Although school inclusion is promoted and works well for many students with severe disabilities, school inclusion is not a disability issue. Inclusive education is a part of school improvement that seeks to provide meaningful education to the range of students In the classroom community. Students formerly enrolled in separate programs have enlarged the curriculum. Some elementary classrooms now have foreign language as a curricular component because former separate bilingual/ bicultural programs were restructured to focus on the needs of all children to learn a foreign language (Baumgart, 1992). Some high school students have an engineering design project, a health practicum, and/or a challenging experience in drama class (Ferguson, Meyer, Jeanchild, Juniper, & Zingo, 1992) because their needs and those of their classmates with severe disabilities or complex health and medical needs are viewed as associated. Diversity, when viewed as a strength and joined to the socio-relations perspective, has been a creative and empowering force in schools. People who work with children in schools must be advocates for all children, not just those with specific labels (e.g., disabled, gifted, bilingual). It is critical that we empower school reform efforts by advocating more than "just" inclusion for students with disability labels (Giangreco, 1989).

Lesson 3: Educational equity is unlikely to occur if Individuals are the gatekeepers to inclusive classrooms.

Inclusive education, as a part of school reform, must involve administrative support. Support must include articulated policies and procedures that ensure equal access for all students. We cannot have groups of teachers in the same or different buildings who "do inclusion" or "do not do inclusion" based on individual biases or fears of

situations to

Language is a powerful indicator of the ownership that general education teachers and administrators have of the education of various students (Giangreco, Dennis, et al. 1993). Implementing inclusion requires an increased understanding that past assignments of expertise related to abilities and deficits of students (e.g., different teachers for gifted students or for those with severe disabilities) was in part an attitude, in part a lack of exposure and experience, and in part practices and assumptions resulting from resource allocation and school structuring at the turn of the century (Ferguson, 1991; Schlechtly, 1990; Skrtic, 1991). When students were assigned labels and corresponding specialists, we often inadvertently encouraged classroom teachers to think of these students as someone else's responsibility (Baumgart, 1992). Within inclusive classrooms, ownership and the responsibility to teach students become a barrier to success if students remain "yours" or "mine" and do not eventually become "ours." It is advisable to establish an expectation of shared ownership and responsibility from the outset. Teachers with the expertise required to meet student needs must continue to be available to students within schools, but role changes and revised understandings of ownership and teaching responsibilities must also be expected.

A common mistake made when initiating the placement of a child with severe disabilities in a general education classroom is to establish the expectation that the teacher is merely a "host" that the responsibility for educating the child is not the teacher's but lies with support personnel, such as the special educator, the speech and language teacher, the physical therapist, or a paraprofessional. Sometimes this situation occurs in an effort to avoid subjecting teachers to situations to which they are unaccustomed. Our efforts to be sensitive to the change this represents for teachers has frequently backfired when special education staff later attempt to encourage greater responsibility on the part of the classroom teacher.

Lesson 6: Inclusive education thrives in settings where instruction is active and participatory.

Instruction that is active, participatory, and child directed produces innumerable learning opportunities for both teachers and students. Much of the literature on active, participatory, child-directed learning

disabilities. Teachers using child-directed learning with students who have disabilities are seeking to understand the communicative intent behind "behaviors" (Baurngart Johnson & Helmstetter, 1990; Durand & Crimmins, 1988) and/or using behavioral state indicators (Ferguson, 1991; Siegel-Causey & Guess, 1990) to identify student intentions that alter previous perceptions of students' abilities. Communication signals have been discovered where previously it was assumed there were none. Using a child-directed approach and looking at "behavior as communication," teachers realized that a whine or cry may be a signal of loneliness or protest, hitting may indicate that a task is too difficult or boring, and humming and rapid eye movements may signal excitement/recognition (Evans & Meyer, 1985; Mallette et al., 1992).

In spite of these parallel developments across education, a common concern arises regarding school inclusion for students with severe or profound disabilities. The difficulty arises when classroom instruction Is mainly passive and/or teacher directed (e.g., primarily lecture, worksheets, teacher recitation to the whole class). In these classes, behaviors like humming, loud teeth grinding, sleeping, or wheelchair banging are often viewed as inappropriate and as indicators that the student is not "ready for" inclusion. We propose that the first response to this concern should be to enhance the curriculum and instruction, based on the associated needs of all students. Active, participatory, cooperative, and "authentic" instruction, coordinated with didactic teaching and skill development, typically optimizes learning and minimizes "disruptive" responses for many students, including those with severe disabilities as well as those without disability labels. Including students in less than adequate general education experiences is not the goal of inclusive education. A second response should be to enhance the communicative interaction. This typically involves reflecting on "behavior as communication," identifying and listening to the intent of the behaviors, enlarging the audience of listeners, and teaching communication partners new ways to communicate. A third response should be to formulate appropriate learning goals for students within the shared activities. Multilevel instruction and curriculum overlapping are keys to successful learning within shared activities (Collicott, 1991; Giangreco & Putnam, 1991).

Multilevel instruction – targeting different learning goals within the same curricular area (e.g.: individualized goals within math or communication) – can readily encompass the learning needs of a diverse group of students. It is not uncommon for teachers to address a wide range of learning goals within active, participatory, instructional activities. For example, curriculum overlapping-selecting individually appropriate objectives from different curricular areas during a

shared activity – is another option for appropriately meeting the needs of students during certain activities. Teachers can address a fine motor or communication skill during shared activities (e.g., reaching for and grasping an object during a science activity, facilitating eye contact with peers as materials are shared in a math activity). For many teachers, curriculum overlapping and the principle of partial participation (Ferguson & Baumgart, 1991) are necessary components to enhancing students' participation in the richness of shared activities while ensuring each student's appropriate education.

Lesson 7: Teachers who are willing to learn from their students and crew ate classroom communities that encourage student participation In the design of their educational experience, report success.

Again and again, teachers who allow diversity in their classrooms to fuel creative problem solving report. success with inclusion. For many adults in schools, the range of diversity possible in their current classrooms exceeds their experience both as former students and as educators. At first, responding to the diversity in students' abilities and needs may occasion an overwhelming desire to "know" all the answers and solutions to what may arise. Teachers who join with their students in creative problem solving (Giangreco, 1993; Thousand et al., 1994), resisting the urge to "know all the answers" beforehand, find new vistas of understanding both for themselves and for the students they support within this process.

SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed two important legal cases, described and proposed using the socio-relations perspective to guide Inclusion and school reform efforts in the future, and offered key lessons learned from those who have implemented inclusion of students with severe or profound disabilities in their schools. Because of the scope of this chapter, many issues have not been addressed, including the details of curriculum, staffing, and

in teachers with differing expertise working together as a team and in an absence of placements based only on a continuum of differences. It also is hoped that future references to students with disabilities will not consist of labels viewed as deficits and categories rooted in differences. We envision descriptors for students being required, given the range of diversity that exists among learners, but the descriptors must focus on students' strengths and related needs for services.

Finally, this chapter described inclusion within the context of school reform. As evidenced by the plethora of published material on school reform, schools have engaged in this process repeatedly. It is hoped that future efforts of school reform end systems change will be embraced as being the continuing work of schools and the creative people who work In them. Thus, change and reform will not b24 cm BT 50 0 0 -50 999.344 841 T

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