Perceptions of Regular and Special Education Teachers Participating in an Integrated Program

Lynne Andrews

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PERCEPTIONS OF REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM

FINAL THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
State University of New York
College at Brockport
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience and attitudes of the regular and special education teachers who are participating in a program which utilizes the consultant teacher model to support the inclusion of children with handicapping conditions.

The subjects were the teachers from grades one through eight who are taking part in the integrated special education program of a rural district. Thirty-eight regular and special education teachers completed a questionnaire about their professional preparation and their experiences with the integrated program. The questionnaire also invited their comments and suggestions for improving the program. The data from the regular and special education teachers were analyzed separately. A statistical analysis was made of those responses which had quantitative answers, while a qualitative analysis of the rest of the data looked for trends and specific suggestions.

Both groups indicated that increased academic progress and improved self-concept are major benefits of the program. They also expressed concerns about other aspects such as their lack of the time and skills needed to accommodate students with special needs.
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Chapter I

Introduction

One of the most controversial issues in American education today involves the delivery of special education services. The field has been in a state of constant, rapid change since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975 which mandated that instruction must be in the "least restrictive environment." However, the controversy is becoming increasingly heated, as a movement toward the regular education inclusion of students with more severe handicapping conditions gains momentum.

In the past, districts often complied with this mandate by placing special education classes within regular schools so that handicapped students could be with their non-handicapped peers for lunch, assemblies, and a few classes such as physical education. Later interpretations of the mandate broadened so that mainstreaming, the concept of instructing exceptional students within regular education classes, became more frequent. At first, this meant placing some students with minor disabilities into a few carefully selected
classes where the instructional goals set for them were similar to those for their nonhandicapped classmates. They still received the majority of their instruction in special, self-contained classes or were assisted in a resource room.

More recent interpretations of the series of laws pertaining to education of students with disabilities stress that they should spend as much time as possible in the regular classroom. One reason for this is increasing dissatisfaction with a segregated special education model which does not appear to be working (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Will, 1986). A growing body of research suggests that instructing handicapped children in special classes and resource rooms does not significantly improve their academic progress and may in fact hinder their academic, social, and emotional growth (Hagarty & Abramson, 1987; Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Madden & Slavin, 1983). Full or part-time placement in regular classes was found to be more beneficial (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Myers & Hounds, 1991).

The need for a more effective method of meeting the specialized needs of these students has led to the
development of the consultant teacher model, which New York State has added to the continuum of services available for children with disabilities (Amendment to Part 200 - Children with Handicapping Conditions of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, New York, 1989). Jackie King, the regional associate of the New York State Department of Education, described it as a model "designed as mainstream support for minimally handicapped students on their way to transition" (1989). With this addition, special education services can be provided directly in the general education class or indirectly by collaboration with the regular classroom teacher.

After Keller and Hanahan reviewed studies evaluating the consultant teacher model, they stated that it is an efficient and effective method of providing services (1987). This conclusion is coming at a time when economic hardship increases the pressure on educators to provide services for greatly increased numbers of children with learning problems. It also coincides with a strong parent movement insisting that their children should be educated with the non-handicapped. Furthermore, the 1990 Code of Federal
Regulations has redefined the concept of the least restrictive environment by stating:

that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children ... are educated with children who are not handicapped, and ... removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (p. 53).

As a result, the current trend includes a drastic reduction of the time that children with disabilities are segregated from the rest of their peers. With growing frequency, even those with severe disabilities are fully integrated into the regular education program. There they receive instructional support from special education teachers, who also collaborate with the classroom teachers on how best to meet the needs of individual students, whether or not they have been identified as having a handicapping condition.

Statement of the Problem

Regular teachers must now deal with handicapped students in their classes, while special education teachers face the loss of their own classes and their autonomy. Two areas of concern for both are class size and their own professional preparation. Many teachers
feel poorly prepared to cope with these rapidly changing programs and the unique needs of the students placed with them. They must develop the necessary skills and attitudes to work effectively with a broad spectrum of students and with each other.

Because the concept of providing special education services via a "push-in" consultant or collaborative program is relatively new, there is little empirical data from which to draw guidelines for implementing integrated programs. This study investigated the perceptions of teachers who are involved in such a program. It asked them to rate the advantages they have seen as well as the problem areas they have encountered. In addition, the study investigated the attitude of the teachers toward the program and their ideas about how it could be made more successful.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience and attitudes of the regular and special education teachers who are participating in a program which utilizes the consultant teacher model to support the inclusion of children with handicapping conditions.
Questions

1) What was the amount and type of training these teachers have received, and do they perceive it as adequate?

2) What features and advantages of the program do they feel are most important?

3) What negative aspects of it concern them most, and what changes would make it more effective?

Need for the Study

As federal and state regulations are amended to support the movement toward full integration, an increasing number of school districts are implementing consultant teacher programs as a means of serving children with special needs within the regular classroom. Frequently there is little preparation for the major changes which staff members are expected to make. Teachers need to know what forms of participation and communication have been most valuable. They also need to be aware of some negative aspects of the model, so that they can benefit from the experience of colleagues who have encountered similar problems.
Definition of Terms

Note: Although definitions of these terms vary throughout the literature, the following are offered for the purpose of this study.

Blended class: Includes both handicapped and non-handicapped students.

Collaborative teaching: An interactive instructional and/or problem solving process between regular and special education teachers.

Integration or inclusion: Full-time instructional integration of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Instruction, instructional goals, and evaluation may be modified according to their individual needs.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be considered in view of the following limitations. First, although the respondents’ sex and geographic background might affect their perceptions, the survey included no questions about these demographic factors. Next, the total number of subjects is relatively small. Moreover, it includes only those teachers (86%) who voluntarily returned the survey, rather than all of those who participate in the integrated program. Finally, all of
the subjects are teachers in the same rural district. Perceptions of teachers in urban or suburban districts might differ. While the results of this study are valid in this district, results may vary in other settings.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The succession of models in special education was examined in this study. First, a great deal of research has studied the effectiveness of traditional self-contained classes and pull-out programs. Second, the concept of mainstreaming has been investigated. Later studies question whether the Adaptive Learning Environment Model makes mainstreaming more successful. Finally, more recent studies examine the effectiveness of the Consultant Teacher model.

Traditional Programs

The research suggests that traditional pull-out programs designed for remediation of students with learning difficulties are frequently not meeting their needs (Wang & Birch, 1984; Will, 1986). In 1985 Weiner found that they have a lower mean academic performance (cited in Myers & Bounds, 1991). Furthermore, studies by Lipsky and Gardner (1987) led them to conclude that students do not benefit significantly from segregated programs. As a result, educators continued to search for a more effective way to serve these students.
Mainstreaming

Many studies support the concept of mainstreaming students with mild handicaps. After a review of the literature, Madden and Slavin (1983) concluded that the research available at that time favored individualized instruction within the regular class or supplemental resource programs rather than full-time special education. Later research by Myers and Bounds (1991) found that special education students in an integrated program made greater overall academic gains than those in self-contained programs. A study by Hill and Reed (1982) indicated that educators perceived that the major benefits of mainstreaming were in helping handicapped children to develop more social skills and a better self-concept and in reducing the social stigma of special education as well as improving the tolerance and sensitivity of other children.

However, Hirshoren and Burton (1979) stated, "Research evidence tends to show that regular classroom teachers do not feel equipped to deal with handicapped children in their classroom, and that when handicapped children were placed in their classrooms, they do nothing extraordinary to accommodate them" (p.93). In
addition, the research of Hudson, Graham, and Warner (1979) found that teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming were not favorable due to the lack of time, training and support which it requires. Since research has shown that teachers' attitudes affect the learning process of their students, several studies have investigated the effect of inservice programs to improve teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming (Hendricks & Sloan, 1981; Larrivee, 1981). While most found that education produced a positive change in the attitude of elementary teachers toward the handicapped, one of the few studies at the secondary level found that training had little or no impact on those teachers' concerns (Hendricks & Sloan, 1981).

Adaptive Learning Environment Model

A review of research pertaining to educational issues for the learning disabled which Keller and Hallahan (1987) conducted suggests that mainstreaming using an Adaptive Learning Environment Model, an approach to mainstreaming in which the instructional pace and materials are adapted to individual needs, may be more effective than the resource room. However, in 1985 Fagan et al. concluded, "... even though there
exists a considerable amount of information on how and what to do in terms of modifications for handicapped students, general education teachers are not overly supportive of modifications and limited implementation has evolved because they view accommodations as unreasonable." (cited in Owens, 1986, p.3-4) These factors have limited the success of mainstreaming efforts.

Consultant Teacher Model

The consultant teacher service appears to be a more effective model (Idol, 1988). Here a specialist provides support services either directly to the student within the regular classroom or indirectly by advising the regular teacher on strategies and accommodations. A review of research by Keller and Hanahan (1987) found that the consultant teacher model appears to be an efficient way to deliver special education services, support mainstreaming and improve academic and social skills of students with learning disabilities.

A review of controlled studies indicates that students who received consulting services made significantly greater gains, as measured by achievement
tests, than those who did not (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Myers & Bounds, 1991). Furthermore, Myers and Bounds found that regular teachers did not lower their expectations for classes which contained mainstreamed students and that the achievement levels of non-handicapped students in these classes did not decrease.

Finally, special education students are not the only ones helped by the consultants. High risk, low achieving children who have not been formally identified as handicapped also benefit from this collaborative consultation (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Keller & Hallahan, 1987; Self, Benning, Marston, & Magnusson, 1991).

However, this model raises other more complicated issues. Self et al. note that scheduling support staff in order to comply with all regulatory requirements is difficult. Furthermore, the lack of adequate training is frequently mentioned as a serious drawback. Giek (1991) reported that in a survey on consultant teacher services in New York State, "... 70% of teachers responding indicated that they had no prior training before assuming the role of consultant teacher" (p. 8). She further reported that a Collaborating Teachers
Support Network like the one newly established in Dutchess County enables teachers to problem solve as well as to exchange ideas, methods, and techniques.

Classroom teachers also need training for their increased responsibilities. In addition to presenting content, Moskowitz (1988) points out that they need to manipulate the classroom environment to maximize the strengths of disabled students, to be aware of emotional factors which may influence their performance, and to understand how a disability affects a child's ability to learn.

Skillful, well-trained consultant teachers can help them to develop these abilities. When Gersten, Darch, Davis, and George (1991) tested a pilot program utilizing apprenticeships for intensive training of consultant teachers, they found that it was more effective than the standard training. Finally, Keller and Hanahan (1987) conclude:

A number of problems also must be faced if a teacher consultant model is to be implemented widely and appropriately. Such problems include (a) an insufficient description of the duties of the teacher consultant, (b) lack of administration support in terms of adjusting caseloads and duties for teachers who do consult, and (c) further legitimization of the teacher consultant role by state educational agencies and teacher training institutions (p. 22).
Summary

Research indicates that children with disabilities do not benefit significantly from traditional self-contained classes and "pull-out" remediation. More recent studies suggest that their academic and social growth is greater if they spend as much time as possible with their non-handicapped peers in regular classes. However, they require modifications in order to progress successfully in integrated programs. Unfortunately, many classroom teachers feel that they lack the knowledge and time required to individualize instruction and to develop accommodations for students who are experiencing difficulties.

The consultant teacher model appears to be a more efficient way to deliver support services to children with learning problems, whether or not they have gone through the formal identification process for special education. However, teachers still need training and time so that they can work together to design and implement alternative interventions.
Chapter III
Design of the Study

Purpose
The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience and attitudes of the regular and special education teachers who are participating in a program which utilizes the consultant teacher model to support inclusion.

Questions
1) What was the amount and type of training these teachers have received, and do they perceive it as adequate?
2) What features and advantages of the program do they feel are most important?
3) What negative aspects of it concern them most, and what changes would make it more effective?

Methodology

Subjects
The 38 subjects in this study were teachers from grades one through eight in the primary and the middle schools of a rural district in upstate New York. This district began an integrated program of instruction in
the primary school six years ago, and has now expanded the program to include all grade levels. The subjects included both the regular classroom teachers and the special education teachers who are currently taking part in the program.

Materials

The study used a questionnaire developed by the examiner (see Appendix). A pilot version was perused by a group of regular and special education teachers in order to gain feedback before the final instrument was completed. As a result, the questions were clarified and refined before the actual survey was distributed. It included questions about the teachers’ professional background and their experiences with the integrated special education program. In addition, the questionnaire invited other comments and suggestions for improving the program.

Procedure

Initial contact was made with the assistant superintendent and the two building principals. This contact served to introduce the study, to solicit their cooperation, and to identify the teachers participating in the target program. Then the examiner delivered a
questionnaire to each subject. A cover letter explained the study and requested the subject to complete the survey within the week and return it to the researcher. A pre-addressed envelope was included to preserve the anonymity of the respondent. After one week, the researcher sent a follow-up letter expressing appreciation for the completed surveys and requesting anyone who had not yet returned it to do so. The return rate was 86%, making the data received valid. The researcher then compiled the data and analyzed them.

Analysis

A statistical analysis was made of those responses which had quantitative answers. A weighted mean was used to compare the choices on the Likert scales. The answers of other sections were compared by percentages of the total responses. A qualitative analysis was employed on the rest of the data to look for trends as well as specific suggestions.
Chapter IV

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences and opinions of teachers participating in an integrated special education program in order to answer the following questions:

1) What was the amount and type of preparation these teachers have received, and do they perceive it as adequate?

2) What features and advantages of the program do they feel are most important?

3) What negative aspects of it concern them most, and what changes would make it more effective?

A questionnaire was given to each of the 44 primary and middle school teachers currently participating in the district’s integrated program. Thirty-eight of these were completed and returned, resulting in an overall return rate of 86%. This included 29 regular education teachers (76%) and 9 special education teachers (24%). Since the perspectives of regular and special education teachers
might be expected to differ, the data were analyzed in separate categories.

**Experience and Training**

The following data were compiled from the answers to questions about the prior experience and training of the teachers participating in the integrated program. A significant difference between the two groups became obvious on these first demographic questions. While the regular teachers had an average of about 15 years teaching experience, they had received little or no training pertaining to special needs students. In contrast, the special ed teachers had an average of only about six years experience. However, their preparation for special education included about 10 undergraduate courses and about five at the graduate level. Moreover, this average will be even higher when several finish their graduate degree work. In addition, the members of this group have attended about two days of inservice training and two days of workshops.
Total years of teaching experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 15</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average training pertaining to special needs students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of courses - undergraduate</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduate</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of days inservice training</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conference/workshop</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven regular teachers reported no training of this kind. One who had attended a workshop said that she needed reteaching because the workshop was two years before she had the experience with consultants. Do you feel that this was sufficient?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs update</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only three teachers answered yes to this question. However, two of those three then checked some kind of additional training which they felt would help them.
Some others indicated that their preparation had been sufficient until the advent of the consultant model, when they were "just thrown in to sink or swim." Some expressed resentment that inservice had been non-existent despite the district's commitment to an integrated program. Several stressed the value of "on the job" experience as they taught in blended classes and worked with the special ed teachers. However, they also expressed concern that their students had suffered from their lack of professional preparation.

**Benefits**

Question two of this study investigated which features of the program teachers feel are most important and what benefits to students they have observed. Given a list of services that the program provides, a majority of both groups indicated that most of the features are essential. Some commented on the importance of all, expressing the wish that there was time to do it all.

A statistical analysis of the Likert scales in the section below uses a weighted mean to indicate the relative importance that respondents placed on each
Participation by special educators in the following areas is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acting as a liaison with other staff members</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting as a liaison with parents</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending pupil/personnel meetings</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing testing modifications</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying instructional materials</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmenting lesson presentation</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team teaching</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting students' schedules</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that every special education teacher considered team teaching essential as an effective way to provide "on the spot" accommodations and to reduce the stigma of receiving special help. This was in sharp contrast to the regular teachers, who gave that choice the lowest rating. Moreover, the regular teachers gave the
highest rating to the item "Acting as a liaison with parents" which received the lowest rating among the special educators.

The survey then asked, "Which of these is most beneficial to you and your students?" Several respondents said they were unable to answer this question since all were of great importance. A typical comment was, "All tie together ... can't choose just one." Of those who did answer, the following were the most frequent choices:

Regular education

1 Providing modifications to instruction and evaluation
2 Augmenting instruction
3 Liaison with parents

Special education

1 Team teaching
2 Providing modifications to instruction and evaluation
3 Providing instructional strategies

One of the special education teachers who chose team teaching explained, "I feel being teamed
makes me less of a stigma for the CSE children and more of an average teacher to the regular children."  

In the next section, respondents were asked to indicate the three most important benefits of integrating children with disabilities. On this question, both groups agreed that helping students to improve their self-concept and to increase their academic progress were the most beneficial. "Encouraging teachers to individualize their instruction" was the last choice of both groups. 

The percentages indicate how many respondents included each item among their top three choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps students improve self-concept</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases their academic progress</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases tolerance of individual differences</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps students with disabilities to improve social skills</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces the social stigma of &quot;special ed&quot;</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposes them to higher level content</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages teachers to individualize instruction</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative Aspects

Problems and Concerns

Question three investigated negative aspects of the program. As expected, both regular and special education teachers most frequently indicated lack of teacher training and lack of time to plan modifications and to provide individual help. One added his biggest concern, the lack of teacher input into the program.

Furthermore, concern about a decrease in overall class achievement, which is frequently cited by critics of integrated programs, was indicated by only four of the regular teachers and none of the special teachers.

The percentages below indicate how many included each item among their top three choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of teacher training</th>
<th>Regular 66%</th>
<th>Special 67%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time to plan modifications</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased time to provide individual help</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper placement of handicapped students</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication between regular and special education teachers</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased time to provide modifications</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in overall class achievement</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several teachers wrote about additional issues which concern them. Regarding placement of students, some feel that low functioning children should not be mainstreamed in all areas when they may be frustrated by content far beyond their capabilities. Another pointed out that poor placement and scheduling negates the concept of heterogeneous grouping. He asserted, "Overloading a class with students with special needs for any reason amounts to segregation."

Some teachers mentioned the lack of adequate space in over-crowded buildings. Special ed teachers with no classroom or only a small office far from the classrooms where they teach have trouble finding places to provide modifications such as reading tests aloud.

In addition, the emphasis on "push-in" rather than "pull-out" services creates other problems such as the distractions that result when two or more teachers are giving simultaneous instruction. One remarked, "In our case 15 students meet with the special ed teacher while I am teaching 20 others ... Non-identified students who cannot tune out a second teacher should not be placed in a blended classroom."
Finally, lack of understanding about handicapping conditions sometimes contributes to teachers' feelings of frustration. Someone who had special education students for the first time this year remarked, "While I have them I try my best with them, but their achievement is not to the point that I feel successful. Therefore I feel like a failure to them." A middle school teacher who has taught blended classes for six years pointed out that too many teachers have "a stigma against CSE students" saying that they can't teach them, but continued, "All pupils can learn; one needs to adapt (the) teaching format."

Improvements Needed

Next, the survey asked teachers what would make the integrated special education program more effective. They were asked to choose from the list given what they believe are the three most important items. Every one of the special educators chose "shared planning time" which was also chosen most frequently by the regular educators. "More teacher training" was the next most frequent choice of both groups, followed closely by "smaller classes." A secondary teacher explained "My mainstreamed class is
my largest." Some expressed their belief that all of
the suggestions should be incorporated into any special
programs.

The percentages below indicate how many
respondents included each item among their top three
choices from the list given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule common planning time</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more teacher training</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make classes smaller</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve placement of students</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve communication among teachers, administration, and parents</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve communication between the regular and special education teachers</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make better use of teacher aides</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another who taught regents level classes for many
years and is now at the end of her first year with
blended classes stated, "The modification I feel most
essential is a change to empowering students to be able
to be more self-directed, more self-controlled, rather
than enabling them to continue in a dependent mode."
Most of the participants indicated that providing more teacher training is an essential component in improving the program. However, perceptions of what kind of training is needed differ greatly between the two groups. The general teachers most frequently asked for instructional methods and modifying materials, which are a large part of the teacher preparation program in special education. They also suggested motivational and behavior management techniques.

In contrast, almost all of the special educators requested collaborative teaching techniques, which was the least frequent choice among the classroom teachers. One of the few general teachers who did request it explained, "I feel very comfortable working with the kids, but could use some ideas to reach collaborative teaching. My teaching style tends to 'put off' the efforts." Special education teachers also want specific suggestions about how to provide services within a blended classroom.

The percentages below indicate how many respondents included each item among their top three choices from the list given.
What training would be most beneficial?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Type</th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific handicapping conditions</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional methods</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying materials</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative teaching techniques</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other requests:

- Regular education
  - Motivational techniques
  - Behavior management

- Special education
  - Modifying instruction in blended classes
  - Managing behavior in blended classes
  - Implementing a consultant teacher model

Other Data

Collaboration

Additional survey questions asked about the teachers' experience with collaborative teaching and the consultant model in an attempt to discern their attitudes about those topics.
Do you do collaborative teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes, would like to do more</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you comfortable with another teacher in your classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes, depends on teachers</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One reflected, "It took about a year for the comfort level to grow." Another answered, "Yes, but I don’t always know what to do with him/her."

Were the respective roles and responsibilities of the classroom and special education teachers clearly outlined?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than half of each group gave an affirmative answer to this question. They expressed the need for "some ground rules regarding who is responsible for"
what." One secondary teacher whose classes included handicapped students for the first time this year commented, "Lack of administrative direction has compounded the problem and added to the confusion ... I would like to see on paper exactly what my duties and responsibilities are with regard to these children ... I have little feeling for what the goal of the program is, and I think we can do better for these children."

Several special education teachers noted that their role varies according to which teacher they are working with, and they must adjust accordingly. One explained, "The tone is usually set by the classroom teacher, but no verbalization as to specific roles or responsibilities is set." Others added, "Regular ed teachers are not comfortable sharing a class" and "Some have more power and won't give up any of it."

Teachers who do feel that their roles are clear seem to have worked out a definition of their responsibilities among themselves. Typical of these is one who asserted, "We work together on everything; each student is the responsibility of both."
Communication

The remaining survey questions concerned the importance, amount, and quality of communication between classroom and special education teachers. The respondents indicated that communication about instructional strategies, modifications, and evaluation were most important to them. A weighted mean indicates the relative importance placed on each service. (A perfect score of 3.0 results if each respondent chooses "3-Essential")

Communication between the classroom teacher and the special ed teacher on each topic is:

1-Unimportant  2-Somewhat important  3-Essential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional strategies</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying materials and tests</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the mainstreamed student</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning style of individual students</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared planning of instruction &amp; evaluation</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight into a student's behavior/performance in other classes or situations</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and federal educational regulations</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many minutes of your weekly schedule is specifically allotted for communication between classroom teacher and special ed teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on schedule</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50 minutes weekly</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes daily</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share a room</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lack of time seems to be the most serious impediment to their communication. Most reported that they had no time scheduled specifically for communication or consultation and must try to fit it into their breaks. Two said that consulting is especially difficult because they are presently working with children from at least thirteen classrooms at two grade levels.

A majority wrote identical responses to the open-ended question, "What would improve communication?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule common planning time</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar schedules</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common break times</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following were added by one or two teachers:

More time
Short daily meetings
Special ed teachers attending team meetings
More open attitudes among some teachers
Increased administration involvement to facilitate
team teaching and shared planning time
Clearer delineation of roles

Summary

The data from the survey indicate that most of the participants support an integrated program for children with disabilities. They cite increased academic progress as well as improved self-concept as the major benefits. One of the original proponents asserted, "Inclusion is the way to go. Pupils are meant to be together."

However, the teachers expressed some serious concerns about specific aspects of the program as they have experienced it. One concluded, "I feel mainstreaming special ed. students into the regular ed. classroom is a vital part of the educational process."
We are, however, limited by the amount of time available for planning and consulting."

The teachers mentioned most often the lack of professional training for their new roles and the lack of consultation time in which to plan accommodations. While they seem willing to participate and to work together for the benefit of their students, they frequently lack the time and skills needed to do so. They want to increase their effectiveness and do better for the children entrusted to them.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences and opinions of teachers participating in an integrated special education program in order to answer the following questions:
1) What was the amount and type of preparation these teachers have received, and do they perceive it as adequate?
2) What features and advantages of the program do they feel are most important?
3) What negative aspects of it concern them most, and what changes would make it more effective?

Conclusions

From this investigation, it can be concluded that too many teachers feel inadequately prepared to perform the job required of them. Almost all the teachers surveyed feel that they would benefit from having systematic training before being expected to instruct children with disabilities in blended classes. The general education teachers had almost no training in dealing with exceptionalities, while the special
education teachers feel the need for an update which includes collaboration and consultation techniques.

The two groups agreed that helping handicapped students to improve their self-concept and to increase their academic progress were the major benefits of the integrated program. However, they differed greatly on which services of the program are the most important.

The greatest concerns of the majority of the participants were their lack of professional preparation for their new responsibilities and the lack of time to plan and provide modifications. Most of their suggestions for improvements related to these concerns.

Reflections

In retrospect, there are changes that the researcher would make in the study. First, no questions specifically addressed the subjects' experience and training with collaborative teaching and with the consultant model or asked if they would like to do team teaching. In addition, since the sex, geographic origin, and educational background of the subjects may affect their attitudes, future studies of this kind should include more demographic questions on
these aspects. Finally, since so many respondents expressed concern about inappropriate placement of students, questions should attempt to discern their reasons for this.

**Implications for Research**

This investigation answered the three questions listed above. However, much more research is needed on other aspects related to this topic. Teacher training programs need to know how to better prepare their students for the realities of tomorrow's integrated classrooms. Administrators need to know how to implement the new consultant teacher service so that they can plan the most effective programs for the special child in the regular classroom. Teachers need to know what specific collaborative techniques, instructional strategies, and individual accommodations should be most successful.

Furthermore, additional research is needed in affective areas such as attitude and interpersonal relations. For example, in this study collaboration and team teaching, which were considered essential by all of the special education teachers, were consistently ignored or negated by the classroom.
teachers. It would be valuable to determine what the correlation is between the subjects' training in integration, collaborative teaching, and consultation and their willingness to do team teaching. Further research to compare teachers' attitude toward collaboration before and after such training would help to determine whether increased knowledge can produce a more positive attitude.

Implications for Teacher Training Programs

Since most future classes will probably include children with a variety of learning problems, professional preparation for all teachers, not only those in special education, should include specific information about handicapping conditions. These programs must train teachers to work with children who have various academic, behavioral, and physical disabilities. Because most of the students who are mainstreamed have been identified as learning disabled, all teachers should take at least one course which deals specifically with learning disabilities, including characteristics, effects on students in class, and strategies for helping students to compensate.
Teachers also need to develop interactive and communication skills. Increased emphasis on techniques of collaborative teaching and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships would be valuable for all, but especially for special education teachers who are increasingly likely to serve as consultants and who usually have to adjust to the style and personality of others.

Special education teachers lack training in consultation, although it is a rapidly growing aspect of their jobs. Better training of consultant teachers, such as the apprenticeship program which Garsten, Darch, Davis, and George (1991) found to be effective, can help existing teachers in the transition to their new roles. In this way, a greater number of general teachers can learn adaptations and other interventions which they can use effectively in their own classrooms. It seems likely that as they become more confident about their ability to teach children with special needs, their attitude toward them will improve.

Implications for Schools

Administration

Providing time for collaboration is the greatest
factor in the success of an integrated program.
Administration involvement is essential in adjusting
the caseloads and duties of consultant teachers so that
they can reach more children through indirect services.
Scheduling time for teachers to jointly plan
instruction and modifications is vital. The most
efficient way to do this is to schedule the special
education teachers as an integral part of the team of
teachers with whom they will work. Thus they will have
the common planning time of their team in which to
consult with other faculty members. This would also
enable them to participate in all Pupil/Personnel
meetings and parent conferences of shared students. It
will also improve the communication between regular
classroom teachers and special education teachers so
that their students can benefit from the skills of
both.

Training appears to be the next most urgently
needed component of a successful program. Relevent
inservice is essential to help develop the specific
skills and techniques needed by teachers of blended
classrooms. In addition to the instructional
techniques necessary to provide modifications, the
development of interpersonal relations and communication skills is essential. Most teachers seem willing to try the new program, but they need this preparation before they can feel comfortable in such new roles. Every school should provide this kind of training for its faculty before they begin to participate in an integrated program.

Those schools which have already begun this kind of program should include teachers in planning pertinent inservice sessions so that they will include what the teachers have found that they need. For example, after the researcher reported the results of this study to the district’s Building Advisory Committee, it voted unanimously to conduct inservice pertaining to teaching special education students during the coming year. The topics of the first two presentations will be an overview of handicapping conditions followed by specific instruction and modification techniques for use in integrated classrooms. These were the topics most frequently requested by the general education teachers. A later session will present collaborative teaching techniques,
which was most frequently requested by the special education teachers.

Administrators also need to redefine the broader roles of the general and special educators, so that teachers know what is expected of them and what their respective responsibilities are. In addition, administrators should try to support classroom-based innovations developed by the participants. Finally, they should consider that all teachers may not be suited for working with the handicapped or for collaborating in an integrated program. It is far better to begin with a dependable core of volunteers and let their enthusiasm spread than to require the participation of unwilling faculty.

Teachers

Changes from the traditional classroom structure to more child-centered methods should be considered. Wang, Rubenstein, and Reynolds (1985) have noted, "... mainstream programs that include such adaptive instructional features as data-based assessment, student self-management, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and consulting teachers are consistently associated with positive outcomes for mildly
handicapped students" (cited in Reisberg & Wolf, 1988, p. 29).

In view of this, it is discouraging to find that both the general and the special education teachers in this study ranked as least important the suggestion that an integrated program encourages teachers to individualize instruction. They need to accept the fact that a class is a mixture of unique individuals who all learn in different manners and at different rates. Even if a class includes no handicapped children, there will be children who can not learn what they are expected to from a rigid presentation. It seems as if it is not so much their failure to learn what was taught, but the educational system's failure to teach them in a way that they can learn.

Schools in England have also begun to integrate their handicapped children. However, when teachers are asked about special needs pupils, they mention only the deaf, the blind, or other physical disabilities. The idea that more than 10% of our children of average or above average intelligence are identified as "learning disabled" seems incomprehensible to them. Since it is unlikely that their population is that much
different from ours, the difference must have to do with the manner of instruction. Because most British classwork is individualized, children with problems in reading or language are accommodated at their own level, and therefore do not need remediation.

In contrast, far too many of American teachers are still relying on whole group instruction. They depend on the lecture method, which research has shown is the least effective for most children, but especially for those with learning or attention deficits. Children who can not keep up become frustrated and fall further behind each year, often becoming behavior problems as well. Too many are considered failures and misfits in need of special services, but when they are assigned to segregated programs for remediation of their deficits, they fall even further behind. The longer they are removed from the mainstream, the less likely it is that they will be able to return, which contributes to the soaring number of students identified as handicapped.

Instead of blaming children for their failure to learn, or removing them from the regular class, teachers must learn to accommodate their individual differences so that all can achieve success. There are
infinite ways to individualize instruction and to make accommodations. In addition to curriculum modification, other common interventions for assisting handicapped students include mastery learning, cooperative learning, metacognitive strategies, and instruction in study skills (Cohen & Lynch, 1991; Owens, 1986; Reisberg & Wolf, 1988).

When teachers return their focus to the teaching of many diverse children rather than the teaching of one predetermined lesson plan, there will be fewer children who need special assistance. Lesson plans and teachers' manuals may be useful as organizers of the subject matter to be covered, but can not replace observing and reacting to the responses of individual children.

More important is the basic message that a teacher communicates to students about themselves, which determines whether they see themselves as capable, independent learners or as incompetent, dependent misfits who cannot function without the aid of special services.

Teachers who act as facilitators instead of lecturers can use a whole language approach to reading
and writing and can assign cross curricular projects which will make learning more meaningful. Teachers who engage in team teaching serve as models of cooperation, collaboration, and respect for each other's unique abilities. Children who participate in cooperative learning groups, "hands on" discovery activities and purposeful writing every day will be actively involved in the business of learning and confident about their ability to do what is asked of them. All of these factors are vital in educating children who will be responsible, capable citizens of the twenty-first century.
References


King, J. (1989). The consultant teacher service. Presented at inservice training by the regional associate of New York State Department of Education.


Lipsky, D. K., & Gartner, A. (1987). Capable of achievement and worthy of respect: Education for the handicapped as if they were full-fledged human beings. Exceptional Children, 54, 60-65.


Dear Colleague:

HELP! I know how hectic May is, but I need your opinion on a topic that we both deal with every day. I am completing my master’s project on integrated special education. Please help me by filling out this survey about your experience with our program. In a pilot study, it took only about 10 minutes to do.

Since I must have a very high rate of return before I can complete the study, I would be eternally grateful if you would return your questionnaire to me this week. I will be glad to send you a summary of the results, upon request. If you have any questions, please call me at the Middle School or at home (589-4908).

Lynne Andrews
7/8 Special Ed
Total years of teaching experience.

How many years in each position?

___ years regular elementary
___ years regular secondary
___ years self-contained special education
___ years resource room
___ years blended classes

What is your present position? ____________________________

What preparation for special needs students have you had?

How many course(s) undergraduate? ____________

graduate? ____________

days inservice training? ____________

conference/workshop? ____________

Do you feel that this was sufficient? If not, please explain.

Please rate the following topics according to how important you believe participation by the special educator is.

Acting as a liason with other staff members 1 2 3

Acting as a liason with parents 1 2 3

Attending pupil/personnel meetings 1 2 3

Providing testing modifications 1 2 3

Modifying instructional materials 1 2 3

Augmenting lesson presentation 1 2 3

Team teaching 1 2 3

Adjusting students' schedules 1 2 3

Which of these is most beneficial to you and your students?
In the following lists, please rank the 3 choices you feel are most important by writing 1, 2, or 3 in the space before your preferred answer.

Which of the following do you see as the 3 major benefits of "mainstreaming" children with disabilities?
- increases tolerance of individual differences
- helps handicapped students make more academic progress
- helps handicapped students improve social skills
- helps students improve self-concept
- exposes handicapped students to higher level content
- encourages teachers to individualize instruction
- reduces the social stigma of "special ed"

What are your 3 most serious concerns about blended classes?
- lack of teacher training
- lack of time to plan modifications
- lack of communication between regular and special education teachers
- improper placement of handicapped students
- decrease in overall class achievement
- increased time required to provide modifications
- increased time required to provide individual help

What are the 3 most important ways to improve the special education program?
- Provide more teacher training
- Improve placement of students
- Make better use of teacher aides
- Improve communication between classroom and special education teachers
- Improve communication among teachers, administration, and parents
- Make classes smaller
- Schedule shared planning time

What additional training would be most beneficial to you?
- information about specific handicapping conditions
- instructional methods for students with disabilities
- modifying materials for the mainstreamed student
- collaborative teaching techniques
- other (please specify)
Please rate the following topics according to how important you believe communication between the classroom teacher and the special ed teacher about each topic is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Unimportant</th>
<th>2 Somewhat important</th>
<th>3 Essential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning style of individual students</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized instructional strategies</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying materials and tests</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the mainstreamed student</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared planning of instruction &amp; evaluation</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight into a student's behavior/performance in other classes or situations</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and federal educational regulations</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What would improve this communication?

How many minutes of your weekly schedule is specifically allotted for communication between classroom teacher and special ed teacher? ________

Do you do collaborative teaching?

Are you comfortable with another teacher in your classroom?

Are the respective roles and responsibilities of the classroom and special education teachers clearly outlined? If not, please explain.

If you would like to add comments pertaining to mainstreaming, please use the space below or on the back of this sheet.