

Inclusive School and Inclusive Teacher

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Abstract

Providing a quality education for all students in inclusive settings has been acknowledged as perhaps the most challenging, yet most important issue in education. The concept of inclusion places the stress on altering the system rather than the child. The inclusive school system is often thought of as the inclusion of all students, regardless of ability into the same schools and classrooms with peers who are not considered to have disabilities. Inclusive school is a school where all children are taught to understand and appreciate human differences. Teachers and administrators receive the support necessary to include all students in regular education classrooms. Parents concern for their children is taken seriously. In inclusive school, special education, is a service rather than a place. Inclusive teacher is likewise a teacher who is equipped with general as well as special techniques of teaching and who can ensure quality education for all students.

Keywords: *Education, School system, Quality education, Special education, Inclusive Teaching, Inclusive schools*

Introduction

Inclusive school is a school where all children are taught to understand and appreciate human differences. Teachers and administrators receive the support necessary to include all students in regular education classrooms. Parents concerns for their children are taken gravely. Supportive learning and peer instruction are strategies used throughout

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the school. Where all kids are given the opportunity to develop real friends, not just peers buddies or helpers. In inclusive school the entire community honors diversity and supports quality education for all students.

Philosophy of teachers about inclusion

Here's what some teachers say about the philosophy of inclusion:

Kliewer (2001) "Inclusion involves all kinds of practices that are ultimately practices of good teaching. What good teachers do is to think considerately about children and extend ways to reach all children. Eventually good teaching is a relationship between two people. Good results acquire to the teachers because they enter into that relationship. Inclusion is very important and providing more options for children as ways to learn. It's structuring schools as society where all children can learn. But there's no formula for becoming an inclusive teacher or an inclusive school. It's not a preset system."

Ettscheidt (1999) "Inclusion is based on the belief that people/adults work in inclusive communities; work with people of different races, religions, aspirations, disabilities. In the same stratum, children of all ages should learn and grow in environments that look like the environments that they will ultimately work in."

Heston (2000) "When good inclusion is in place the child who needs the inclusion does not stand out. Strong parental participation includes in the inclusive curriculum, students making choices, and a lot of hands-on and heads-on involvement."

East (1995) "Inclusive education means working of teachers with the students in that situation which is suitable to a miscellaneous population of students. It also means the teacher may need another

prospect and goals for students, and its complex to get teachers to do this.”

Inclusive education

Inclusive education means that achievement of education is the right of all the children in their own community schools. Inclusive education means that classroom teachers have the final authority and responsibility for educating them. This does not mean that all children will necessarily receive all instructional services in the regular classroom.

Kronberg (1992) “Inclusive education does not mean that students must waste every minute of the school day in general education classes, that students never receive small-group or individualized instruction, or that students are in general education classes to learn the core curriculum only”.

It means, rather, that if a trained disciplinary team decides that students require instruction beyond the normal developmental curriculum, need services beyond the ability of the classroom teachers (e.g. mobility training or speech reading) or specialized services, then them (which includes the classroom teacher) ensures that students receive this help in their community school. Moreover the classroom teachers are in charge of orchestrating all the required elements of his or her program plan.

Stainback (1992) “Some educators have suggested that inclusion means getting rid of special education special educators, and a continuum of services” (e.g. individualized instruction and tutoring). We believe that inclusion means that those elements are brought into regular classroom. Inclusion embraces the concepts of integration and mainstreaming and promotes the idea that every one has a contribution to make, that a child’s school experience should be one that is maximized,

not restricted. We agree with Rogers, J. (1992) they note that inclusion means that the child's educational program is adapted to meet his or her academic or social needs and the child and teacher receive the support they need to succeed. Full inclusion never means simply placing a child with challenging needs in an ordinary classroom without adaptations or supports.

Collier (1987) "Inclusive education can function on many levels. In inclusive education the disabled student joins the general education classroom for part of the day, depending on the type and strictness of the disability. In inclusive education all students are in the general education classroom instead of the special education classroom. Theoretically this would eliminate the need of a special education classroom. Full inclusive education should allow disabled students to be part of the various setting, teach social skills, foster independence and provide opportunities to build friendships with non-disabled peers. Factors to be considered in the development of a full inclusion classroom should include age appropriate placement in local public schools, integrated delivery of services in the general education classroom, social integration, curricular expectations adapted to the level that best challenges the handicapped student, home-school partnership, staff development, team collaboration, and systematic evaluation and related services".

Implementing inclusive classroom approach in schools

Salisbury (1994) "It is actually useful that the process of inclusion needs to occur within the larger context of a school where there is a clear philosophical foundation teaming practices and a commitment to shared decision making". Unfortunately not all schools and communities value the inclusion or teaming model of intervention. Even though national

mandates and policies call for the provision of intervention services in mainstream schools laws alone are insufficient for changing attitudes.

Stainback, (1993) “Opponents of inclusive classrooms often refer to barriers that inhibit effectiveness of this approach. Such barriers include lack of adequate training in general and special early education philosophical difference between the two disciplines lack of related services in many programs (e.g. speech language therapy, physical therapy etc and lack of monitoring systems and negative staff attitudes. Additional barriers that have been identified by other researchers include the emphasis on academic achievement in the educational reform movement competition for shrinking fiscal resources lack of flexibility in teacher’s contracts and lack of clear policy directives”. All of these identified barriers are indeed real issues and need to be addressed in planning and implementing inclusive programs for he/ she children with special education needs. Unless these barriers to inclusion are adequately addressed it will be difficult to convince reluctant schools and communities to move toward or adopt the inclusive approach.

School-based learning

All parents want their children to feel confident and competent when they enter school yet there is no way to build in assurance that this will be the case. While this is true whether or not a child has a disability the concerns are certainly magnified for children with special educational needs. Common concerns expressed by parents of children with disabilities relate to medical fragility and or special health condition (e.g. seizures asthma immune deficiency etc). Peer acceptance and making friends participation in group activities (e.g. listening to stories playing group games etc) and fear and distress in separating from parents. The transition from home-to school-based learning places new expectations

and demands on the child and family. Both child and family must become acquainted with new people in their lives and adjust to new schedules. Parents know there will be certain school-related behaviors that their child will be expected to adopt.

Inclusive Teacher

To be effective an inclusive teacher education program must instill in the pre-service teacher an understanding and appreciation of diversity. It means they must be equipped with both general as well as special education techniques through pre service, and in-service (training program).

Pre-service teachers must also become comfortable with change and they must learn early on in their preparation to be flexible and creative. Our classrooms have undergone tremendous changes and those changes will continue in the future. It is one of the biggest roadblocks to inclusion has been the inability of many educators to shift from one operational standard to another. This can be proficient by providing experiences that require forthcoming teachers to develop creative problem-solving skills and to view situations from different perspectives. Some of the main essentials of inclusive teacher are as under:

- i) Teachers' Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes towards inclusive education

Many teacher characteristics affect the process of inclusive education, for example, the type and level of educational training and the number of years of teaching experience. Ostensibly, the more training and experience teachers have in special-needs education and programming, the greater their chances for successfully implementing educational programs and practices based on inclusive education. And if classroom teacher are

willing to teach children with diverse learning and behavioral needs, the chances for effective inclusive education are greatly increased.

Inclusive education also depends on certain necessary values. Teachers need to value learning as a lifelong process in which they share responsibility with parents for maximizing the quality of children's lives; the need to enrich children's academic and social competencies; their colleagues and the benefits of collaboration; and, perhaps most importantly, the goals of inclusive education.

It has been suggested that the most critical element of inclusive education is the attitude of classroom teachers toward children with special needs. Teachers' attitudes affect not only what happens in classroom settings but also the instructional option that is chosen for students. Unfortunately, many teachers are opposed to having children with diverse needs in their classrooms. This finding suggests that teachers must be given opportunities to confront their biases so that constructive and workable solutions can be developed. Attitudes vary according to types of disabilities, the types of perceptions people have about disabilities and the labels assigned to children with disabilities. Teachers' attitudes influence the nature of the interaction between students and teachers, as well as the students' achievement.

Schrag (1994) point out those teachers constantly communicates important messages to students about individual differences. It becomes obvious to all students whether teachers favor high achieving students, feel respect, pity, or disgust for

students who have special problems, believe that every person has inherent value, or are prejudiced against those who are different.

ii) Enabling Conditions for Inclusive Education

The merger of regular and special education will not happen quickly or easily. The process requires regular and special educations to consult and collaborate with one another and to plan provide adaptive instruction for all children. It also depends on teacher's positive attitudes and the resources available. From our perspective the most important enabling conditions are professional training and development, pooling of resources and administrative leadership and support.

iii) Adaptive Instruction

Inclusive education requires regular and special education teachers to respond and adapt innovatively and collaboratively to the unique learning needs of all students. Adaptive instruction assumes that each teacher will identify and provide a wide range of instructional supports that are needed by individual students to effectively master the learning and behavioral objectives.

Wang (1984) Adaptive instruction requires teachers to, "Assess the characteristics and capabilities of each student, collaborate and consult with others to plan developmentally appropriate instruction. Then make environmental and individual accommodations to facilitate student learning. Then manage and instruct students in ways that permit those to master content at a pace suited to their abilities, needs, and interests. This will result in promoting all students' social ability and social integration".

One of the basic premises of effective adaptive instruction programs is that a variety of educational objectives, instructional materials, and learning tasks is needed; furthermore, success in achieving instructional objectives requires a wide selection of teaching and learning strategies.

Successfully implementing and practicing adaptive instruction procedures depends on teachers' beliefs about student diversity, and on the enabling conditions of the educational environment.

iv) Professional Training and Development

Teacher's federations agree that present in-service training methods fail to provide successful integrated learning experiences. Teachers need information that will broaden their understanding and appreciation of children with special needs- for example, information on how to identify learning problems, and on how to adapt the environment and their instruction to accommodate those problems. Their courses should include such things as dynamic assessment, individual educational planning, adaptive instruction differentiated learning, multicultural education, and holistic curriculum development.

v) Pooling of Resources

Inclusive education will need a high quality of service, requiring well-trained teachers, support personnel (e.g. teachers' aides), transportation services, school building modifications, and material resources (e.g. assessment instruments program materials and instructional aides). Inclusive education will

impose additional financial demands on school board. Therefore teachers must be trained to pull resources for inclusion.

vi) Collaborative Teaming

Smith (1993) “The ultimate goal of collaborative teaming is the creation of a collaborative school. At its core are the professional relationships, particularly between teachers and administrators, and the unified goal of school-wide, continuous improvement, and shared responsibility for the continuous progress of all students within the learning community”.

Salisbury (1994) “Collaborative problem solving to promote inclusive education is typically carried out between teachers and other support professionals who get together to solve specific problems, usually concerning a student or group of students, focusing on classroom-based interventions increase the students’ chances for success. Assistance might involve interactions between classroom teachers and speech and language specialists, counselors, school psychologists, specialists in visual and auditory impairment, special-education specialists, or other specialists’ bilingual education, reading and mathematics. The relationship in collaborative problem solving is based on mutually defined goals and a common framework, and involves shared authority for idea generation, mutual accountability for success, and the sharing of resources and rewards”.

vii) Co-teaching

Reynolds (1991) Co-teaching may refer to cooperative teaching or collaborative teaching, and is sometimes referred to as team

teaching. Cooperative teaching requires a group structure and clearly defined roles for the participants. Collaborative learning requires only a collaborative goal. Team teaching is seen to be either the equivalent or a subset of co-teaching. Co-teaching as an activity in which special educators and general educators work together in one physical space in a variety of instructional activities in order to provide optimal instruction to the greatest number of students.

viii) Achieving social integration

Research findings indicate that children with and without disabilities generally do not engage in high levels of social interaction with one another unless they are encouraged and supported in doing so. Factors frequently associated with this lack of interaction include language and cognitive delays poorly developed play skills and behavior disorders on the part of the children with special education needs. It takes a great deal of energy and creativity on the part of early childhood educators to achieve social integration between children with special education needs and their typically developing peers as the levels of social interaction skills of these two groups generally differ to a significant extent.

ix) Individualized curricular accommodations

Salisbury (1994) "Curricular adaptations are usually designed to serve two main goals to promote positive child outcomes and to optimize the physical social and instructional inclusion of the child in ongoing classroom activities. Do adaptations in an inclusive program actually achieve these goals? Results of

studies relating to each of these outcomes lend support to the effectiveness of the inclusion-with-modifications model. Further studies however are certainly warranted. Such studies would do well to focus on the effects and perceived value of the process by stakeholder groups including school administrator's teachers and parents".

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