

Drawing Distinctions Between Coherent and Fragmented Efforts at Building Inclusive Schools

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Abstract

As many schools and districts move in the direction of providing full membership for students with disabilities, benefits are being reaped for many students. Concurrently, attacks on the concept and practice of inclusive education have also been growing. Many of these critiques have focused on the challenges involved in attempting to include students with significant disabilities in general classes. This discussion highlights the importance of making clear distinctions between the implementation of comprehensive and coherent inclusive practices and the inevitable problems or dilemmas that result from partial or fragmentary implementation. Practices that are seen in successful inclusive settings are discussed, as well as ideas concerning implications for future research and practice.

Drawing Distinctions Between Coherent and Fragmented Efforts at Building Inclusive Schools

As many schools and districts move in the direction of providing full membership for students with disabilities, implementation efforts vary greatly. When implemented carefully, benefits are being reaped for many students. Parents are seeing changes in their children's lives.

Comments such as the following are not unusual:

I think [my son] put it best when he said that he didn't feel like he was in the dumb room anymore--because that's what the kids call special education, and so I think that--that helped him a lot

She's done wonderfully, and every year she's made great gains, and I have ~ belief that she's made great gains because she's in an inclusive setting.

You could just see the difference in him. He had done like a 180 degree turnaround; he was just so happy--and he talked about kids in school all the time, and he wanted everyone to come here and visit. He wanted to go to everybody's house and he still does. (Davern, 1994, pp. 202-203)

Concurrently, attacks on the concept and practice of inclusive education have also been growing (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 1993; Shanker, 1994). Some critiques have focused on the challenges involved in attempting to include students with significant disabilities in general education classes. Stories of unsupported teachers, inadequately prepared staff, inappropriate materials. lack of planning time. and

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Development of this article was supported in part by the New York Partnership for Statewide Systems Change, which is a collaborative project of the New York State Education Department and Syracuse University, funded by the US. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Grant #H086J00007); and the Consortium for Collaborative Research on Social Relationships, which is a cooperative agreement awarded to Syracuse University by the Office of Special Education Programs (Grant #H086A20003). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education or the New York State Education Department and no official endorsement should be inferred.

unhappy students and parents are cited as indicators of how unrealistic and undesirable inclusive schooling is.

It is evident that there are many situations in which changes in students' placements from segregated to general education environments have been implemented inappropriately and supported inadequately. It is also evident that implementing inclusive education is complex and time-consuming--as are most other serious efforts at improving schools. However, unlike some vocal critics who believe that the complexities of inclusive schooling require a moratorium on further implementation, the task before us now is to proceed whole-heartedly in examining successful practices, disseminating information about these practices, and determining what can be learned from efforts that have been misdirected or ill-informed.

The purpose of the following discussion is to highlight the importance of making clear distinctions between comprehensive and coherent inclusive practices and partial or fragmented implementation efforts; that is, those efforts that simply add students with disabilities to settings without looking at how the organization of schooling needs to change. Making this distinction is critical because school personnel and parents are viewing problems in settings that are being identified as "inclusive," and interpreting these problems as evidence that inclusive practices cannot possibly lead to good education for all students. This interpretation arises from an insufficient understanding of what inclusive education is and the characteristics of inclusive settings that lead to optimal outcomes for students and staff. As noted by the National Association of State Boards of Education,

inclusion is not just a practice...it is a philosophy of supporting children in their learning that undergirds the entire system... hence, inclusion has implications for how schools are organized and restructured, the curriculum, instruction, teacher training, and the types of materials and instructional technology used in the school. (Roach, Ascroft, Stamp, & Kysilko, 1995, p. 7)

Many schools are implementing practices which do not even closely approximate the

dimensions of change described above, and are calling such efforts "inclusive education." These efforts can be described more accurately as partial implementation initiatives. Such approaches result in numerous dilemmas. The following is not a comprehensive list of such dilemmas or concerns, but rather those which are most apparent in talking and working with staff, parents, and students. It is important to note that being critical of particular practices is not a reflection on the commitment or good will of those who have designed or implemented them, but rather, represents an attempt to bring attention to the inevitable problems that arise from underdeveloped efforts. This attention is necessary in order to make improvements in the ways in which initiatives are undertaken and to prevent school personnel and families from reaching the conclusion that "inclusive education" does not work, when in fact, what they are evaluating is not inclusive education. We will also describe some of the practices that we see in successful settings and offer some ideas concerning implications for future research and practice.

Developing Criteria: "Michael is not an 'Inclusion Student'"

Some school districts have yet to make a commitment to the philosophy of inclusive education. Such districts talk about inclusive education as part of their "continuum of services" offered to students with disabilities. This approach ties the level or intensity of support services needed for an individual student to a particular degree of restrictiveness deemed necessary to provide the service. Students who require high levels of support are typically segregated while students who need less support are "included." While described as "inclusive education," there is little to distinguish such an approach from earlier mainstreaming models. Within this approach, a somewhat greater number of students considered to have mild disabilities are placed in general classes, while other students with more significant differences continue to spend most of their day in special classes. Such districts are essentially doing what they have always done, but are renaming it inclusive education.

These districts follow a "readiness" model in order to determine who can be a member of a general class. When a student attains what is often an arbitrary level of academic achievement

and/or social skills (or a district receives a sufficient amount of pressure from a parent or advocate), the student is included in a general class. Such a philosophy is evident when school personnel discuss criteria for who is an "inclusion student" and who is not. This type of practice creates a subgroup of students who are perpetually segregated. This is a misinterpretation of the concept of inclusive schooling.

This type of approach stands in stark contrast to systems that offer full membership to students with a range of learning, physical, and emotional characteristics. If there are children for whom such schools have not yet been able to figure out the array of required supports, staff continue to work actively toward the goal of full membership for these children. The question personnel in such schools ask is not, "how does this student have to change in order to be a fourth grader?" but rather, "how do we have to change in order to provide full membership to this student?"

Implementing Pilot Programs: "We'll Start Small and See if it Works"

Qualified commitment to the concept of inclusive schooling is also apparent when programs that emerge as a result of parent or teacher initiatives do not expand beyond their modest beginnings. While "pilot" efforts do sometimes lead the way to a system-wide plan to build an inclusive school, frequently this is not the outcome. At times, inclusive education has remained a feature of only a few students' programs. An inclusive setting or two are added on to the existing school structure as opposed to altering that structure. As a result, general class membership is an option offered to a small number of students while special class placement remains the norm for many students with disabilities.

A different approach is evident in schools that move from initial efforts to the development of mission statements and action plans that focus on restructuring schools (Thousand & Villa, 1995). In this way, administration, staff, and family members have a coherent framework within which to work toward attaining their goals in relation to students with disabilities. A wide range of students are assured full membership as the school grows year by year in its capacity to have all students learning together successfully.

Clustering: "I've Got Too Many 'Inclusion Kids' in my Class"

Clustering a significant number of students with disabilities in a single classroom is a practice that has occurred in some schools. The rationale for such a decision is to provide an enriched staffing pattern in the setting. At times this has resulted in up to 40% or 50% of the students in a classroom being students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). While the intention behind such a move is often understandable, the outcome cannot be defined as an inclusive setting. The underlying philosophy of inclusive education is to create heterogeneous classrooms that reflect the diverse population of our communities. Clustered settings that result in vastly unnatural ratios of students with disabilities to students without disabilities are not inclusive in nature. Such models also limit the number of people in the school who will expand their confidence and skill related to teaching heterogeneous groups.

Effective schools attempt to achieve as close to a natural percentage of students with disabilities in any particular setting as possible, while providing adequate support from special education teachers, related service personnel, and paraprofessionals. While attaining an actual "natural" proportion remains a goal for many effective settings, it is apparent that a significant overrepresentation of students with disabilities in one setting runs contrary to an inclusive philosophy. Children should be dispersed to the greatest extent possible while still maintaining a sufficient degree of services to the classroom setting in order for all children to make progress.

Disrupted Transitions to the Next Grade: "So We Don't Have an Inclusion Classroom at the 4th Grade"

Depending solely on teachers who volunteer in order to include students with disabilities into general education programs is a practice undertaken in many schools. When the number of settings is limited in this way, students are annually at risk for re-segregation as they transition from grade to grade or level to level. Some students have even been retained in a grade because no teacher volunteered at the next grade level. Some students have skipped a grade in order to acquire a general class placement.

Depending on volunteers has become a double-edged sword. During initial efforts in some schools, working with volunteers has been helpful in getting programs successfully underway. Teachers who had positive experiences shared their perspectives with colleagues, thus laying the groundwork for increasing the pool of volunteers. Unfortunately, such an approach has also created a context where educators could say, "No thanks. I'm not interested."

Some districts that began with volunteer teachers have evolved in their thinking and practice to a point where every teacher understands the rationale for general class placement, and realizes that she or he will have a range of student characteristics in any given year. One of the first steps in this transition is to purposefully hire new teachers who are interested in heterogeneous classrooms (Roach et al., 1995). Concurrently, schools can be very clear in terms of their long-term goals and work with teachers over time to build the attitudes and skills necessary to implement successful and comprehensive inclusive programs.

Lack of Staff Preparation: "They Told me I was Starting Inclusion on Monday"

Some teachers have been inadequately prepared for receiving a student with a significant disability. Such placements are made in a haphazard fashion with the classroom teacher receiving little useful information about the student. The transition steps needed to share information among team members have not taken place. While the teacher may be open and willing, the collaborative culture and the structures needed to support a successful program have not been developed.

In schools where inclusive education is working, as evidenced by the success of the students and the satisfaction described by teachers, administrators and parents, several activities have occurred. School leaders have worked closely with parents and staff to develop an action plan for a smooth transition to an effective and responsive education program. Teams (with parent members) have found ways to share important information among members and to ensure that such information is passed on from year to year. Such teams seek to create IEPs that are useful and understandable to all members--using the general education curriculum as a basis for the design of individual plans (Udvari-Solner, 1995). Ongoing staff development opportunities and support are provided for personnel. Staff have the information and resources that are necessary to do their jobs.

Misrepresentation: "Don't Worry. You Won't Have to Change a Thing!"

At times, the move toward creating inclusive settings is presented to staff as requiring minimal change in the norms of schooling. This approach is reflected in comments to classroom teachers such as, "Don't worry; you won't have to change a thing. This student will have a teaching assistant who will take care of everything" or comments from teachers such as, "It's been no problem; I don't have to plan for her at all," or even more worrisome, "You don't even know she's here."

When a student with a significant disability is placed in a general education classroom, there will be a change in that classroom. There are typically more adults in the setting requiring a highly collaborative approach in order to be successful. "Selling" inclusion by claiming that it will not involve changes in classroom structure or pedagogy is not only deceptive, but also neglects to adequately address the benefits that can result for all children when the number of adults in the classroom is increased and their talents are fully utilized.

Inadequate Preparation for Teaming: "It's so Hard Having Another Adult in My Room"

Teachers sometimes find it difficult to adjust to the new roles required for inclusive practices. Special educators may be uncertain of their roles in general classes, unsure of the curriculum, and confused as to how they can best utilize their skills in this setting. They sometimes report feeling marginalized or reduced to secondary or auxiliary status. Due to a lack of common planning time with the classroom teacher (or lack of collaboration during whatever common time exists), they may not know what is happening in the class on any particular day, thereby having to determine all modifications "on the spot." Given few leadership responsibilities, the special education teacher may hover over students with IEPs unnecessarily, acting as a barrier to social interaction.

Likewise, these changes in staffing configurations may be problematic for general educators who are accustomed to being the only adult in the classroom. They may feel embarrassed or awkward having another adult observe their teaching, worried that they are being evaluated, and hesitant to share decision-making with others. Without preparation in successful teamwork skills, both teachers may be threatened by each other's presence--each feeling that

asking for assistance in problem-solving may be a sign of incompetence. In such situations, the nature of instruction may remain largely unchanged, staff skills are underutilized, and additional staff in the room do not evolve into full members of an instructional team.

This outcome is to be expected given that general and special education teachers are usually prepared for their professions separately, often with little knowledge of, or appreciation for, the skills of their counterparts. In some districts, special education teachers are supervised through different departments or divisions, thus widening the professional and interpersonal gap between themselves and general educators.

Within successful teams, members meet regularly and use what time they have effectively and efficiently (Thousand & Villa, 1992). Members rotate through a variety of roles in the classroom: planning, leading large group activities, facilitating small group instruction, providing individualized instruction, monitoring student activity, and meeting with parents. Such roles evolve and reconfigure over time after a foundation of trust has been established. If asked, students report that there are "three teachers in our class" --even though these adults may be paraprofessionals, general educators, special educators, and at times, related service personnel. They do not identify Mr. Mendez as the "special education teacher," Ms. Pulacki as the "real teacher," or Ms. Kramer as "the lady that works with Marissa." The quality of the learning environment is enhanced by the complementary roles of the adults. All talents are fully utilized. As one team member put it, "together we are stronger."

Inattention to Scheduling Time for Collaboration: "We Try to Catch Each Other in the Hall"

Scheduling ongoing planning time with other members of the instructional team has been a challenge for many classroom teachers. Relying solely on chance meetings in the hallway or the teachers' lounge is insufficient to build the necessary foundation for helpful and informative relationships between general educators, special educators, and other team members. While the willingness, interest, and skills necessary for teaming may be present, the logistical supports are not.

Some schools have found creative ways of ensuring that teams have consistent meeting times in order to plan for students (Raywid, 1993). These have included adopting "block" scheduling (enabling several teachers to be free at the same time), using paraprofessionals and other support personnel to free some staff for planning, and arranging early dismissal or late arrival for students on a particular day to enable entire teams to engage in planning. Some meetings may occur outside the typical school day in order to accommodate parent participation. In these ways, schools have made collaboration a high priority.

Inappropriate Use of Paraprofessionals: "No Problem. Jason has a One-to-One"

The addition of a paraprofessional to a classroom often occurs when there is a student with a significant disability enrolled. While an extra adult in the setting is often critical to a student's success, this type of support has the potential to add to the stigma the student experiences, and thereby increase social isolation.

There are several factors that contribute to paraprofessional support being used inappropriately in a setting. This situation may arise because there is a misunderstanding of what it means when a student with a disability is assigned the support of a "one-to-one" paraprofessional during the IEP process. Paraprofessionals in this situation may feel that they are neglecting their responsibilities if they are not in proximity to the student at all times. In addition, having another adult in the room is a new experience for many classroom teachers, who may be uncertain regarding how to utilize the paraprofessional. They may have been given little guidance other than, "This is Latisha's assistant."

In contrast to the above, paraprofessionals in some settings are assigned to specific students

"on paper," but in practice, they function as co-teachers, supporting the entire class. They take an active part in all aspects of classroom life, and become skilled in moving around a classroom while still being attentive to the student with a significant disability. They are not solely responsible for the education of the child, but rather, are one member of the teaching team.

Although paraprofessionals are not expected to invest the amount of time in planning and other activities that would be expected of professional teachers, their talents are acknowledged and fully utilized. Paraprofessionals' responsibilities may be as varied as facilitating small or large group instruction, monitoring student progress, as well as assisting any student who may need some extra attention. Depending on their backgrounds and interests, they may design learning activities at times. They and other adults view their roles as facilitating positive interaction among students as opposed to creating barriers between them. They are considered full members of the educational team.

Creating Buddies for Students with Disabilities: "Who's Going to Help Lisa Today?"

Effective teachers seek to create an atmosphere where students are helpful to each other. At times, this helping behavior tends to focus on the student who has a disability. This student may have a "buddy" assigned to work with her or him, oftentimes at a task separate from the rest of the class. It's not unusual to hear comments from teachers such as, "They all fight over who's going to help Lisa." This type of arrangement can be problematic since authentic friendships are unlikely to develop if students are placed in special helper roles in relation to the child who has a disability (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994).

Successful teams create a classroom atmosphere where helping is the norm; each student is viewed as having something to offer others. Adults look for or create opportunities to present the student with a disability as a valued member of the classroom--who, like others, is sometimes in a helping role and sometimes being helped. In this way, the student is seen as a person who can engage in reciprocal relationships, instead of always being at the receiving end of assistance. Children assist each other in a routine fashion as members of class-wide partnerships and cooperative groups.

Lack of Preparation in Multi-level Activity Design and Curricular Adaptations: “What’s This Kid Going to Get out of the Oregon Trail?”

Some school personnel are uncertain as to how a student who appears to have significantly different levels of achievement in traditional academics could benefit from general class membership. Given the nature of most teacher preparation programs, the historical emphasis and organization of curriculum in our public schools, and the past segregation of students with learning differences, this is understandable. In a study of our nation's schools (1984), Goodlad found that many classrooms were dominated by methods that resulted in students working alone. It is difficult to facilitate meaningful engagement for students with differences in reading, written expression, or communication when one task is presented to the class and each student is expected to complete it on her or his own. These teachers, like many others, were likely using the methods they learned through their own experience as students, as part of their professional preparation, or from colleagues.

Teachers with an interest in expanding their repertoires of instructional strategies to accommodate differences in learning characteristics, interests, and cultures often do not have opportunities to pursue their own professional development. Since becoming proficient with new ways of structuring learning activities is a challenging and oftentimes frustrating process, it is quite difficult for individual teachers to expand their range of instructional methods through self-study alone.

Fortunately, in some schools, classroom practices are changing. Effective staff development programs are underway in order to provide personnel with the information they want and need. There is growing attention in the school reform literature given to the use of varied teaching techniques, particularly in response to the different ways in which children learn. Teachers are being encouraged to take into consideration the multiple intelligences of children in planning educational activities (Gardner, 1993). Garibaldi (1992) has called for instruction that is more flexible, cooperative, "movement-oriented, participatory, and exploratory"--particularly in ethnically diverse settings (p. 30). Similar approaches are being advocated for students with significant learning, physical, or emotional differences. Emphasis is being placed on

cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Meyer & Henry, 1993; Putnam, 1993; Sapon-Shevin, Ayres, & Duncan, 1994), multi-level activity design (Giangreco & Putnam, 1991), building environments that celebrate diversity (Sapon-Shevin, 1992; Schneidewind & Davidson, 1983), and project and theme-based instruction (Cohen, 1991; Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 1992). Frameworks for decision-making regarding curricular adaptations are being developed (Udvari-Solner, 1995).

Within the overriding perspective of maintaining the highest expectations at all times for all students, the academic goals for an individual student in relation to a particular topic such as the Oregon Trail may be modified. The definition of "success" for a particular student may be based on individual goals determined by the teaching team (including parents and older students). These goals may focus on both academic skills as well as skills that are "embedded" in most activities-- areas such as communication, social, and motor development skills. At times, a student may be making commendable progress in many embedded skill areas, but this progress goes unnoticed because it is not assessed or acknowledged as important when compared with academic achievement. What any student gains from an activity that focuses on the Oregon Trail may have more to do with the level of innovation in instructional design, and the skills to assess student growth along multiple dimensions, than with the nature of the topic under study.

Inflexible Evaluation and Resistance to Accommodation: "That's not Fair!"

Adaptations in objectives, materials, and evaluation strategies become necessary in order for some students to make progress on individual goals and participate successfully in general classes. The willingness to implement such adaptations is not always present. This resistance may be expressed by staff reactions such as, "That's not fair!" when modifications are requested by other school personnel, parents, students or advocates.

Schools sometimes provide general class membership to students with disabilities without engaging in a school-wide dialogue regarding the rationale and ramifications of such a change. Without this dialogue, as well as opportunities to expand professional skills and knowledge, teachers sometimes operate under a prevailing definition of "fairness" which is based on "giving equal amounts of attention," and "judging everyone by the same objective standards"

(Lightfoot, 1978, p. 22). As schools move away from segregation of students with disabilities, it is clear that operating under this definition is inadequate, and that new understandings related to individual differences must emerge.

While many school personnel may be willing to adjust goals and materials for individual students, they receive little guidance in determining how to formulate grades for students who receive such adaptations. Such confusion is often compounded by a lack of consensus regarding evaluation and grading in general. Some teachers set achievement criteria that are used to determine grades. Others factor in effort and improvement. Regardless of whether teachers view letter grades as a helpful means of conveying information, the conditions of their employment usually require teachers to generate them. Teachers struggle with a clash of two world views--one that welcomes students into a learning community, and another which is concerned with rating students against uniform standards for achievement.

A growing number of school leaders, personnel, and parents are talking about why their schools are going in the direction of inclusive education, and determining together what staff development experiences are needed for everyone to be successful during this transition. Information about students with diverse learning, physical, and emotional characteristics needs to be infused into a range of staff development activities. In successful settings, personnel are receiving a clear and consistent message from school leaders that accommodations are to be expected. Opportunities are provided for all parties to share concerns, experiences, and engage in problem-solving around barriers such as evaluation and grading procedures. This does not mean that teachers have the option to reject particular students based on differences in learning characteristics, but rather that their thoughts and concerns are an integral part of the change process.

Discussion

Many of the above dilemmas appear to be a direct result of districts approaching inclusive education in a reactive and piecemeal fashion, without a long-term vision of what such a change in philosophy and practice entails. In response to a request from either parents, teachers, or administrators to create inclusive settings, staff are shifted around and students are placed in general classes. While these steps are necessary, they are not sufficient to achieve the quality of schooling children deserve. The scenarios presented above reflect the need for: 1) system-wide movement toward inclusive schooling; 2) coherent staff development programs; and 3) teacher preparation programs that focus on the skills needed for working effectively with heterogeneous groups of students.

System-wide Movement Toward Inclusive Schooling

Partial implementation efforts, while often noteworthy in regard to their impact on individual students, have resulted in a myriad of problems, only a few of which have been explored in this discussion. Schools are beginning to remedy this situation by looking at how schooling needs to change for all students (Roach et al., 1995; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992). In some schools, movement away from the use of segregated settings is an integral component of a wider school restructuring effort that may include progress toward multiculturalism, site-based management, collaboration across disciplines, innovative instructional approaches, relevant curriculum, and more authentic forms of student assessment. Working groups of parents and teachers (and students at times) are looking at how schools need to change and developing detailed action plans for progress. Such plans outline policy changes, staff development needs, models for how staff are to be utilized and how students are to be placed in classes. Long-term planning such as this is imperative in order to develop coherent ways of ensuring that students with disabilities can progress smoothly and successfully from grade to grade or level to level with other students their age. Planning also ensures that the

resulting number of students in any particular class is workable for general educators, as well as special educators who are supporting students in that setting.

Such planning needs to include meaningful dialogue within the school community as to why parents are seeking general class placements for their children, what research has to offer regarding the impact on students, and what staff feel they will need in order to be successful. This dialogue needs to allow ample opportunities for all parties to share concerns and experiences. Maximum creativity and flexibility should be utilized to create time and space for team members to plan together. Teaming becomes a school norm as opposed to a special model for students with disabilities.

There is much that can be learned from looking at how inclusive schooling has evolved in particular buildings. We need to continue to build our knowledge base related to issue such as: how buildings have moved from one or two inclusive classes to more system-wide approaches; how schools have moved from volunteer models to creating expectations that each teacher will have students with varying abilities in her or his classroom, and how are schools organizing the instructional day so that teachers have time to plan together. Looking carefully at how individual districts and schools go about such changes, as well as the successes and difficulties they have encountered, will be critical to future success.

Coherent Staff Development Programs

A fundamental component of systematic change efforts is a carefully designed staff development program. Such a program addresses topics related to inclusive education within the context of general school reform or "reculturing." Fullan (1993) draws a distinction between restructuring and "reculturing" --which he defines as "establishing a culture conducive to change" that encompasses "the values, beliefs, norms, and habits of collaboration and continuous improvement" (p. 131).

One component of reculturing needed in most schools is related to effective collaboration. Within schools that are successfully implementing inclusive practices, staff explore the ramifications of working together. Classroom teachers who previously were "on their own," often find that their work is more interesting and their teaching more effective as they engage in active

partnerships with colleagues such as special educators and related service providers, as well as parents and volunteers. The attitudes and skills underlying this collaborative approach need to be part of an ongoing comprehensive staff development program. Concurrently school administrators must work with personnel in order to create ,the type of scheduling and staff assignments that lead to authentic collaboration. Embedded in such activities is the discussion of the role of paraprofessionals as valued members of the teaching community. Guidelines related to paraprofessionals' roles can be developed in order to fully utilize their talents, and provide them with the learning opportunities necessary to offer excellence in instruction and support. The facilitation of friendships and other child-to-child interactions are fundamental components of their preparation.

An additional area for continuous improvement is innovation in teaching approaches. Heterogeneous classrooms require a high level of creativity in order to be successful. Districts need to move quickly in expanding the knowledge base of personnel regarding teaching practices for heterogeneous settings so that a greater number of teachers can approximate the level of innovation now evident in some. Schools will need to find ways to build competence in a timely manner in the areas of assessment; activity design; cultural diversity; differences in styles of learning, as well as physical and emotional characteristics; and the integration of related services (e.g., speechlanguage, occupational and physical therapy) and remedial services. Strategies for achieving such growth include surveying in-district and surrounding districts for expertise in inclusive practices and innovative teaching strategies; providing assistance for personnel to continue their professional development through self-study, university courses, conferences, and visits to other schools; and providing appropriate in-district staff development programs related to innovative teaching practices.

The continued study of settings will shed light on how effective teachers are organizing instruction to include active roles for more than one adult in a setting, and ways of assessing learning so that multiple adults interacting with the same students can quickly and easily communicate goals and strategies with one another.

Teacher Preparation Programs That Focus on Skills Needed for Teaching Heterogeneous Groups of Students

Teacher preparation programs play an important role in facilitating the development of inclusive programs in our schools. Schools of education, in partnership with internship sites, need to graduate teachers who: understand the rationale for moving away from the segregation of students with differences; expect to work closely with others and possess the skills to do so; view parents as significant team members; and have the skills necessary to modify curriculum, design multi-level activities, provide adaptations and facilitate friendships. One approach to achieving these outcomes has been to merge general and special education teacher preparation programs (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997; Meyer, Mager, & Sarno, 1993).

Parents and school personnel are describing significant benefits to students in inclusive settings. Yet, there are also numerous settings that have implemented general class placement for students with disabilities with minimal alteration in the ways that adults work together, the climate teachers establish in their classrooms, the curriculum they draw upon to design learning activities, and the structure of those activities. The challenge before us is to make clear distinctions between the features of schooling that result in effective inclusive settings and underdeveloped attempts which are falsely identified as inclusive schooling. Quality is inherent in the definition of inclusive education.

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