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**THE EFFICACY OF THE COLLABORATIVE TEACHING MODEL FOR
SERVING ACADEMICALLY-ABLE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Submitted by:

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February 1995



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SERVING ACADEMICALLY-ABLE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

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Collaborative Teaching Research Study

Executive Summary

Collaborative teaching is the latest attempt by the field of education to address the instructional needs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. It is distinctive in design because the focus of the collaborative teaching concept is keeping students with disabilities in regular classes to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers (a "keep in" program versus a "pull out" program). In a collaborative teaching arrangement both regular and special educators use their coincidental and complementary skills to teach students with disabilities. Because of the diversity of learning arrangements needed in classrooms with students with disabilities, collaborative teaching is a flexible system of curriculum, instruction, and behavior management. It is dynamic and responsive to the individual needs of students with special needs.

Presently, collaborative teaching is used for a variety of students with disabilities. These students are considered mostly to be academically able. A large number are judged to be mildly disabled and the great preponderance of students come from the high incidence category - learning disabled. Collaborative teaching should not be equated with the concept of "full inclusion", although there can be some

overlap. In theory, full inclusion is an administrative arrangement for serving all students with disabilities, whereas collaborative teaching is an instructional arrangement to meet the unique educational needs of academically-able students with disabilities in the regular classroom. The distinct difference is the disabled population to be served and the overall goals of individual educational programs. Full inclusion includes ALL students with disabilities - including students with severe disabilities.

Currently, there is a fair amount of writing done on the topic of collaborative teaching. But there is a paucity of research on the collaborative teaching model. Efforts to evaluate its efficacy have been limited. Even those who have written extensively about the model have not fully researched its short, intermediate or long-term effects. Preliminary data have shown positive views from teachers, students, and parents.

Review of Literature

Introduction

Since the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children's Act, in 1975, the focus on service delivery to students with disabilities in schools has been education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This precept of law stemmed from normalization, a movement borne in the 1960's which philosophized that people with disabilities should have an opportunity to lead as close to a normal life as possible (Wolfensberger, 1972). LRE emphasized the psychological and educational needs of students with disabilities as superordinate to the special education services they received. In essence, they were to fit into a continuum of services that ranged from segregation in special campus and self-contained programs (most restrictive environment) to integration in categorical or non-categorical resource rooms to mainstreaming programs (least restrictive environment). For the first time in the history of the field of special education the student's needs dictated the educational placement rather than the placement directing the student's program. It was the beginning of a series of systemic conceptualizations to serve students with disabilities which developed over the past twenty years and is evolving even to this day.

This change in human service philosophy meant that for the first time children and

youth were not automatically segregated simply on the basis of disability. They were to find their way into educational environments that brought them into contact with students who were not disabled. This change necessitated new paradigms of cooperation and collaboration between regular and special education teachers. The model of instruction that posed the greatest challenge was mainstreaming. Here special education students who could benefit academically from the regular classroom instruction and socially from interaction with nondisabled peers were educated in the "mainstream". This was the ideal in the movement and the goal of all programming for students with certain disabilities.

Through the latter part of the 1970's and throughout the decade of the 1980's mainstreaming in regular classes (whether all of the day or part of the day) became the model of choice. Programmatically it was fueled by the fiscal concerns of school district administrators. The confluence of these thoughts became the catalyst for innovation and experimentation in delivery of service models in special education. This result was very important. The net effect of the federal law in 1975 was more students being educated the majority of their school day in the regular classroom. This precipitated numerous teacher support models such as: teacher consultant, educational strategist, diagnostic-prescriptive teacher, crisis-resource teacher, and assessment teacher. In all these models the special education teacher was the expert about exceptionality and consulted with regular education teachers on instructional and behavioral issues. In some cases

(depending on the design and philosophy of the school division) students would be "pulled out" of their mainstream classrooms and be educated in a special education resource room. Other students would stay in their regular classroom placement for the entire school day. This was true of students at all levels of education- elementary, middle, and secondary.

In 1986 amidst the climate of educational reform sweeping the country, the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, further energized the notion of shared responsibility of students with disabilities through a controversial proposal of an integrated system of services. The concept was called the "regular education initiative" (REI). The reason for REI stemmed from several concerns (Hunt & Marshall, 1994). All students with disabilities were not benefitting from the existing system. The process of decision-making about the needs of students with disabilities was making adversaries of parents and teachers and, the empirical evidence was mounting that impugned the efficacy of special education classes.

REI triggered many administrative changes in the education of academically-challenged special education students through an emphasis on regular classroom placement irrespective of severity of disability. It, for all intents and purposes, made the continuum of most restrictive to least restrictive placements obsolete. Its premise was viewed as a radical departure from traditional thinking of serving special education students. Paramount in REI's philosophy were collaborative

efforts of both regular and special education teachers in order to marry their talents in the teaching of students with disabilities in mainstream settings.

The Assistant Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education espoused the view that special education students would be better served and successfully taught in an REI model because it merged the roles of regular and special educator. This position engendered a great amount of debate on both sides of the issue (Maheady & Algozzine, 1991; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988).

While the effects of REI took hold in the field, another issue developed out of the confluent themes of LRE, REI, and mainstreaming. The debate about mainstreaming as a viable delivery of service option had always primarily centered around students with disabilities who were thought to be able to succeed academically with program supports. "Full inclusion" was thrust into the educational arena by professionals who worked with students with a wide array of severe disabilities (i.e. mental retardation, dually diagnosed disabilities and multiple disabilities). These disabilities posed great challenges for integration in a regular classroom because the special needs of these students were not always focused on academically-related issues. In fact, part of the goal of full inclusion was socialization with nondisabled students and being part of a classroom ecology where students approximate normal models of behavior and interaction. Those who argue vehemently for the concept of "full inclusion" believe that all students with disabilities should be educated in the mainstream for those reasons,

irrespective of severity of disability or complexity of needs.

In effect, full inclusion negates the continuum of educational services (options of service delivery) that were developed over the past two decades to serve the diversity of needs of students with disabilities. More specifically, it renders useless more restrictive special education environments. It also has a variety of implications for the roles of special educator and regular educator as well as the goals of regular education and special education (Stainback & Stainback, 1993). At a minimum it does, however, approach the ideal of normalization which has been the driving force of various efforts to integrate disabled and nondisabled children and youth over the past 25 years.

As one traces the progression of special education services from the inception of P.L. 94-142 and through its reauthorization as P.L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), several patterns emerge. First, all special education students have moved closer to the mainstreaming over the years. Currently, the majority of students with disabilities in the United States are educated in regular classrooms. Second, this has put more responsibility on regular education teachers at all educational levels to educate students with special needs. Third, collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers has become important in order to teach students with disabilities in their cognitive and affective growth.

The Collaborative Teaching Model

Facing the realization that more students with disabilities are to be educated in the mainstream, various models of collaboration and cooperation between regular and special education have developed. Most prominent of the models of collaboration is the collaborative teaching model (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989).

Collaborative teaching has been defined as "an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a co-active and coordinated fashion to teach jointly heterogenous groups of students in educationally integrated settings (i.e. general classrooms)....In cooperative teaching both general and special educators are simultaneously present in the general classroom, maintaining joint responsibilities for specified education instruction that is to occur within that setting (p. 18). This theoretical definition has been operationally defined by Parrott (1989) after extensive experience with the model as it is implemented at the school division level.

"Collaborative teaching is an approach to education whereby general and special educators voluntarily agree to maintain joint responsibility for educating special education students within general education classrooms. This combines the expertise of each individual teacher, whose training and experience are very different, to create a teaching team of extremely high caliber" p.3.

In essence, the general educator shares expertise in all aspects of curriculum, effective teaching, and large group instruction. The special education teacher contributes knowledge in such areas as learning styles and strategies, clinical teaching, and behavior management. In total, the team works together to create a learning environment in which all students can learn from a multiplicity of instructional and behavioral techniques. This model is implemented via several different arrangements including: 1) team teaching, 2) complementary instruction, and 3) supportive learning activities. These three elements of collaborative teaching are explained by Parrott, Driver, & Eaves (1992).

"Team teaching involves both teachers in teaching the content material. They may coordinate daily instruction, with one teacher reviewing or setting the stage for new instruction, the other teaching the new skill. Educators may divide responsibility for teaching the curriculum, either on a consistent basis or varying from one unit to the next. Shadowing may also occur, when a teacher rephrases or presents instruction in a different way to clarify information for the students. Team teaching can be implemented in both large and small group instruction."

"Complementary instruction is the arrangement in which the expertise of the special educator is best utilized within the co-taught class, the arrangement which truly sets co-teaching apart from other teacher-teaming situations. After the

instructional needs of students are assessed and the content to be taught by the general educator is determined, special educators carefully plan and implement instruction to supplement the regular curriculum. The supplemental instruction provides for all at-risk students, including those who are disabled, the academic and survival skills necessary to be successful with the curriculum."

"Supportive learning activities are developed by teachers to allow students to become actively involved in the reinforcement of skills and content. These can be viewed as creative alternatives to seatwork. For the special educator who does not feel comfortable teaching content, taking responsibility for developing and implementing supportive learning activities is often chosen as a means for establishing him/herself as a teacher in the general education classroom. Conducting cooperative learning centers for independent or small group reinforcement are examples of the responsibilities often assumed by the special educator in a co-taught class." p.4.

These in-class instructional arrangements have been delineated further by Cook & Friend (in press) into a five structure model: 1) one teach, one assist, 2) station teaching, 3) parallel teaching, 4) alternative teaching and, 5) team teaching. Each structure is explained below.

- 1) One teach, one assist- both teachers are present, but one - often the

general education teacher - takes the lead. The other teacher observes or "drifts" around the room assisting students.

2) Station teaching- teachers divide the content to be delivered, and each takes responsibility for part of it. Some students may also work independently. Eventually all students participate at all "stations".

3) Parallel teaching- teachers jointly plan instruction, but each delivers it to half of the class group.

4) Alternative teaching- one teacher works with a small group of students to pre-teach, re-teach, supplement, or enrich while the other teacher instructs the large group.

5) Team teaching- both teachers share the instruction of students. They take turns leading a discussion, demonstrate concepts or learning strategies, and model appropriate question-asking or conflict resolution behavior.

Because of the dynamic relationship of collaborating teachers and the need for flexibility to meet a wide diversity of educational needs, all these arrangements can be utilized in a collaborative classroom from activity and/or period to period in a given school day.

Whereas inclusion is an administrative concept, collaborative teaching is instructional by design. Its process acknowledges that the mode of instruction is "keep in" rather than "pull out" as contrasted by many of the past educational services to students with disabilities. It also has other benefits. The presence of a regular classroom also serves as a preventive mechanism for students who are at-risk for school failure. Moreover, not all students referred for special education services are eligible to receive them. They, however, can benefit from the collaboration of teachers to address their academic and social problems.

Ultimately, the collaborative classroom becomes a setting where education can be delivered to students with a wide diversity of learning and behavior profiles. In addition, there is increased job satisfaction, reduced stress, enhanced stability, and increased teaching/learning potential (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Results of related research in this area show academic viability, augmented self-esteem and less stigmatizing social effects, and general parental satisfaction with an integrated model as opposed to a "pull out" special education model (Affleck, Madge, Adams, & Lowenbraun, 1988; Lowenbraun, Madgem & Affleck, 1990; Madge, Affleck, & Lowenbraun, 1990).

Research on Collaborative Teaching

To date most of the writing about the collaborative teaching model has focused on the model in toto and its components, the new paradigm of regular and special education cooperation, and how to implement a collaborative teaching program. Despite its gaining popularity the process has not been thoroughly researched nor has its efficacy been judged. A few studies on collaborative teaching have been published. One of the studies focused on various aspects of collaborative teaching as it was implemented in four (three high schools and one middle school) of thirty secondary schools in Anne Arundel County, Maryland (Walsh, 1991). A survey was designed to compare a one year co-teaching experience with the previous year's special education placement experience. Those who responded to the survey were pairs of co-teachers, building administrators, special education students, and parents. Results showed that special education students, cooperative teachers, and parents preferred the collaborative teaching model to the previous year's "pull out" experience. The special education students felt they learned more, enjoyed school more, had adequate time to finish their work, felt free to ask questions, and liked receiving special education services in regular classes instead of separate special education classes. Moreover, teachers and parents reported that their children seemed to try harder, learn more, receive more homework and schoolwork in collaborative classes.

In another study of a pilot collaborative teaching project in the Pacific northwest United States Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend (1989) found after a year of training and implementation that 46 general and special educators felt increased satisfaction (special educators more), reduced stress and burnout (special educators more), enhanced stability (special educators more), and increased teaching/learning potential (general educators more). In addition, Bauwens et al. (1989) surveyed participants of cooperative teacher training workshops to identify 30 potential obstacles. The three items selected with greatest frequency were time, cooperation and increased workload. However, the authors pointed out that these issues may not be potential barriers after field-based practical experience and knowledge.

Friend and Cook (1992) conducted anecdotal research on collaborative teaching. After interviewing collaborative teaching teams they found that collaborative teaching was perceived as effective and enabled them to use a wide array of teaching techniques. Moreover, the model positively affected student achievement and the self-concept of students. Similar results were also found by White and White (1992) in a middle school study and Harris, Harvey, Garcia, Innes, Lynn, Munoz, Sexton & Stoica (1987) in a high school program.

Conclusion

Collaborative teaching is the latest attempt to integrate students with disabilities into regular classrooms. Yet philosophically it is a break from past "pull out" models of special education services because it focused on keeping students with disabilities in the mainstream by recasting the role of the special educator and regular educator and restructuring their relationship. Because of the paucity of research, albeit generally positive in nature, the collaborative teaching model still needs empirical data on which to base an evaluation of its efficacy. There is no doubt that the goals of this model come closest to the ideal of normalization cast almost three decades ago. All important, however, are the outcomes of the students who have been educated via the collaborative model as well as the integrity of process and content of collaborative teaching's system of service delivery.

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