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AUTHOR Payne, Reed; Murray, Charles J.
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ABSTRACT

The concept of a service delivery system as it relates to handicapped students is explained, and characteristics of a new model for service delivery in special education are described. Present service delivery systems are seen to be lacking in uniformity in the types and quality of services available and in continuity of programs to all age levels and disabilities. The proposed model is broken down into five areas: students in the regular classroom who are having problems beyond the competencies or skills of the regular teacher; students who may be receiving formal support since the informal help provided by the system (Area I) was deemed not appropriate; students with a moderate level of problem; students in the self-contained special education classroom; and the exceptional child who is unable to function within the regular school setting. Diagrams are given for the five delivery phases. (SBH)

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Building A Comprehensive Special Education
Services Delivery System:
A Proposed Model

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Reed Payne, Ed.D.
Department of Special Education
Temple University

Charles J. Murray, Ed.D.
New Jersey Department of Education

C.E.C. Convention
Atlanta, Georgia
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A Service Delivery System
for Special Education: An Introduction

Reed Payne, Ed.D.
Charles J. Murray, Ed.D.

Prior to any discussion of a service delivery system for handicapped children some mention of what is meant by the concept of a service delivery system is needed. Is it a useful concept for the educator? How does it relate to concerns at the local level?

The concept of service delivery systems becomes useful when it forces the examination of individual activities and functions and assists in gaining a better perspective of concerns and their relationship to a total services system. For many of us this is a unique perspective.

In a very real sense our schools constitute an example of a service delivery system. The school attempts to utilize all of the resources, human and material, in the provision of educational services to children. We in special education interpret this effort to include meeting the needs of all children. Comprehensive programming for handicapped children can be achieved only by taking the broadest possible view of service delivery. For only from such a broadened framework can appropriate goals for children be developed and implemented.

Historically, services for handicapped populations have been delivered to the consumer in a "piecemeal" fashion. A comprehensive service delivery system to meet the needs of this population is not currently in place. There is little uniformity in the types and quality of services available.

Special Education Programs during the past decade have been aimed primarily at the elementary age child. Children with problems at the secondary level have been spiratically serviced. Vocational programs for handicapped students are a rather recent innovation. Such programs were practically non-existent a few years ago. Nationally, thousands of school-aged handicapped children remain unserved or underserved. When we examine the delivery of services for the handicapped child, we find a spotty patchwork system with little linkage between services and/or programs. Complete continuity of programs to all age levels and disabilities is seldom observed.

Until recently, Special Education programs have primarily focused on the primary and intermediate levels. It has been felt, and justly so, that early intervention was the key approach to many of the problems manifested by the handicapped child. Early intervention does offer the best hope of familiarating problems that act as a barrier to a normal life. However, on examining a

service delivery system, all components are crucial. Special Education programs are often distorted to meet specific "special educational concerns" rather than the needs of the individual children. Pressures from community and parent groups have had a significant impact upon programming. Children's needs in some instances have only been met through the insistent voice of parent groups. Children with less vocal support have not fared as well. These kinds of pressures have led to a delivery system which does not always respond to the needs of all the handicapped population in a systematic manner. Within the existing system, the special educator has been forced to respond to these and other pressures. Unfortunately, he has found himself moving from crisis to crisis. Precious little time has been available to work with general educators to develop a comprehensive delivery system.

The movement toward "the least restrictive alternative" now provides the special and general educator an opportunity to work through these problems together and to jointly plan for the handicapped child using the service delivery concept. To do less than this, will mean the failure of meeting the needs of the individual child.

How can the use of the concept of service delivery at the local level be an aide to our planning efforts? Using the concept as a guide, we start by determining what the goals of our local delivery system should be. This step alone will force us to ask some tough questions about our own beliefs and the beliefs of the school system itself. However, once these goals have been delineated, an outline of specific objectives which will enable us to meet these goals can be developed. Once this is accomplished, examination of what is being done and more importantly what ought to be done, can take place.

This needed assessment will hopefully touch upon a number of problem areas as well as uncover resources not previously considered or under-utilized. The assessment should never be cast as a fault finding expedition, but rather as a planning cast which will inventory our human and material resources. It should also produce a plan of attack. It is interesting that one of the most common problems brought to light during the assessment of the delivery system is the problem of system gaps. The system assessment often discloses that elements or subsystems do not interconnect. These "gaps" in the delivery of services are referred to as the "cracks" through which children fall.

In addition to the gaps between the subsystems, you may find that the school elements or subsystems simply do not exist. In the Special Education delivery system this problem is exemplified by the lack of programming for certain categories of handicapping conditions and/or certain age ranges, particularly evident are preschool and secondary. An assessment of a system might indi-

cate questionable priorities assigned to available resources. With this and other insights into the system, we start to plan in terms of what actually needs to be done, and what functions have to take place within each subsystem. Again, functions will relate back to objectives and goals of the system. With a delivery system designed to meet the needs of children, we will not find ourselves in the embarrassing position of fitting the child into the program or rather developing a program to meet the needs of the child.

You will note we have not talked about the problems of the emotionally disturbed, the retarded, or the physically handicapped. We have not been talking about State regulations or about financing. All these issues have their place but we have too long been a slave by them. The service delivery concept strongly implies that the place to begin is with the services needed. To translate this knowledge into meaningful goals, and gear up the school district to meet the challenge.

A New Model for Service Delivery in
Special Education

In his address to the second annual convention of the American Association for the Education of the Severely/Profoundly Handicapped in Kansas City, Missouri, Edward Sontag, Chief of the Division of Personnel Preparation (BEH), called for newer models of service delivery (Sontag 1976). Dr. Sontag suggested that the 'continuum' and 'cascade' models "offered little-if anything new for the severely handicapped child."

This writer agrees with Dr. Sontag on the potential usefulness of newer models. Although existing models may have been useful to special educators, they have had little meaning for the general educator.

Recent experiences in conducting mainstreaming workshops for general and special educators leads this writer to believe that an updated model would be extremely useful to the general educator and ourselves, the special educator.

If we were to list several requisites for a new model of special education services, the following issues should be of primary concern.

1. A new model should be comprehensible (understandable) to the general educator, from the chief school officer down to the classroom teacher, as well as the special educator.
2. The model should be broad enough in scope to encompass all children within the school district from the mildly handicapped to the severely impaired.
3. The model should encompass current trends in special education such as mainstreaming and least restrictive environment.
4. The model should be service delivery oriented to serve as a practical aid to school districts seeking direction and guidance in developing programs for the special education child.

The Proposed Model

With these pre-requisites in mind, the writer proposes the following model for consideration by special and general educators. See Figure 1..

Insert Figure 1

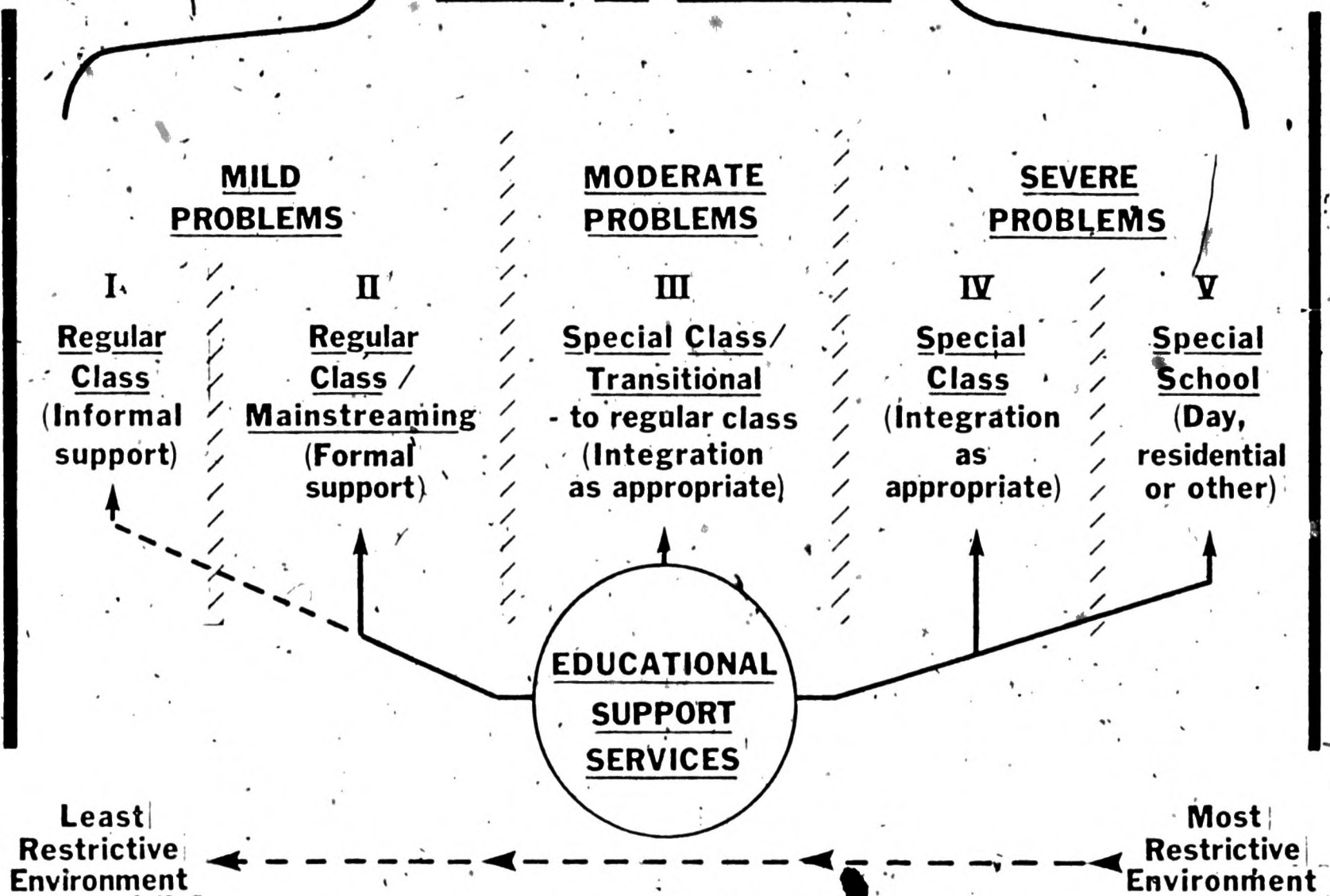
The basic rationale of this model is that there is a broad spectrum or band of services which shall be provided by the school district. These services will range from the regular classroom setting to the special school setting, and include all children. Services to these children are part and parcel of the school district's responsibility, although the school district may not always physically administer services to the child. The heavy vertical bands at the extremes of the model suggest the scope of school district concerns.

The level of the problem is seen as being most severe on the extreme right hand side of the model and decreasing in severity as one moves from the right to the left within the model. The general thrust is always toward providing a less restrictive environment within the school district setting.

The vertical hatched lines between the three areas designated as mild, moderate, and severe (and within the areas themselves) suggest the 'grayness' of these delimitations or categories. The hatched lines imply flexibility and ease of movement of children from a restrictive environment to a less restrictive environment.

Rather than indicate that there is any one best method of support for the exceptional child, the model suggests that what is actually needed is the concept of an 'educational support system'. This 'system' should be so structured as to be able to respond with appropriate levels of intervention as necessary. No two school districts will have the same support system needs and therefore

BAND OF SERVICES



A Model of Special Education Support Service For Exceptional Children

it is unwise to propose resource rooms, itinerate teachers, child study teams, etc., as being the best method of service delivery.

Area I - Regular Class

Area I represents the student in the regular classroom who is having a problem(s) that is beyond the competencies or skills of the regular teacher. Support for the teacher, the child or both is necessary. This support or intervention should be available on an informal basis. The dotted portion of the support line shows the informal nature of this type of intervention. It is to be emphasized that there are many alternate ways of providing this informal support. The principle concern of Area I is the provision of services without the time consuming and expensive evaluations normally required before help is given.

Area II - Regular Class/Mainstreamed

The main difference between the students in Areas I and II is basically that the support system is formalized in Area II. Legislative and statutory regulations have been met, and the child has been evaluated in a formal manner.

Children in Area II may be in a sense moving in either direction. That is, the child may be receiving formal support since the informal help provided by the system (Area I) was deemed not to be appropriate. Intervention is required above the level that can be provided on an informal basis. On the other hand, the child may be coming into a mainstreaming situation from an even more restricted environment such as Area IV or V.

If the mainstreaming effort, which is the focus of Area II, is to be successful the responsibility for the child's educational program belongs to the regular class teacher. This is not the situation where a special education student is integrated into selected regular classes for a limited part of the day - a testing of the waters so to speak. Such a program is characteristic of

a preparation situation rather than a true mainstreaming situation.

Area III

Area III of the proposed model attempts to emphasize the fact that for many students with a moderate level of problem, special class placement should be viewed as a transitional phase. The goal for such students should always be to move them toward a less restrictive environment.

The educational program is primarily the responsibility of the support system and integration into regular classes, when it does occur, is carefully monitored.

Area IV

In a sense, Area IV of the model represents the traditional self-contained special education classroom. The self-contained classroom has much to offer the exceptional child when an intensive intervention program is judged to be the best alternative. For many children, the self-contained classroom is a necessary step toward a less restrictive environment. For others, it may be the least restrictive environment for an extended period and perhaps for their entire time in school.

These self-contained classrooms of Area IV are an integral part of the school district milieu and the students within these classes should be integrated into regular school activities with their peers whenever possible.

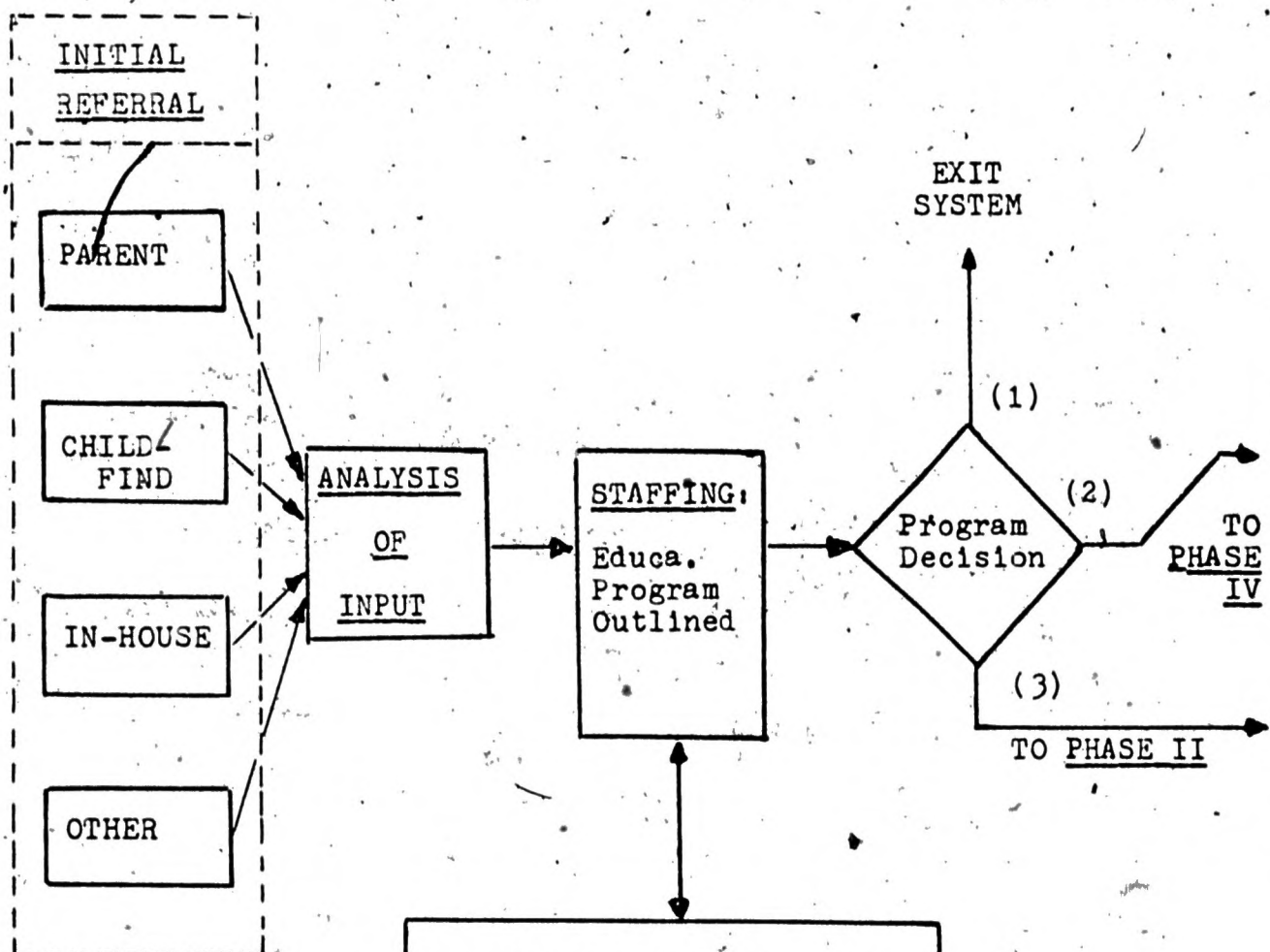
Area V

The exceptional child within this area of the model is one, who, for a variety of reasons (i.e. magnitude or severity of the problem), is unable to function within the regular school setting. However, his/her separation should always be viewed as a temporary phenomenon.

The school district does a grave injustice if it tends to wash its hands of these special education students, for whatever reasons. The local school district is obligated either morally or in fact by law to monitor the progress of the child so placed. The school district can continue to offer and provide support as the child is readied for return to the district.

Sontag, Edward "Zero Exclusion: No Longer Rhetoric" Apropos Spring-Summer, 1976

PHASE I R E F E R R A L



THE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

- o Administrators-
Special & General Ed.
- o Teachers-
Special & General Ed.
- o Specialists-
- o Others-

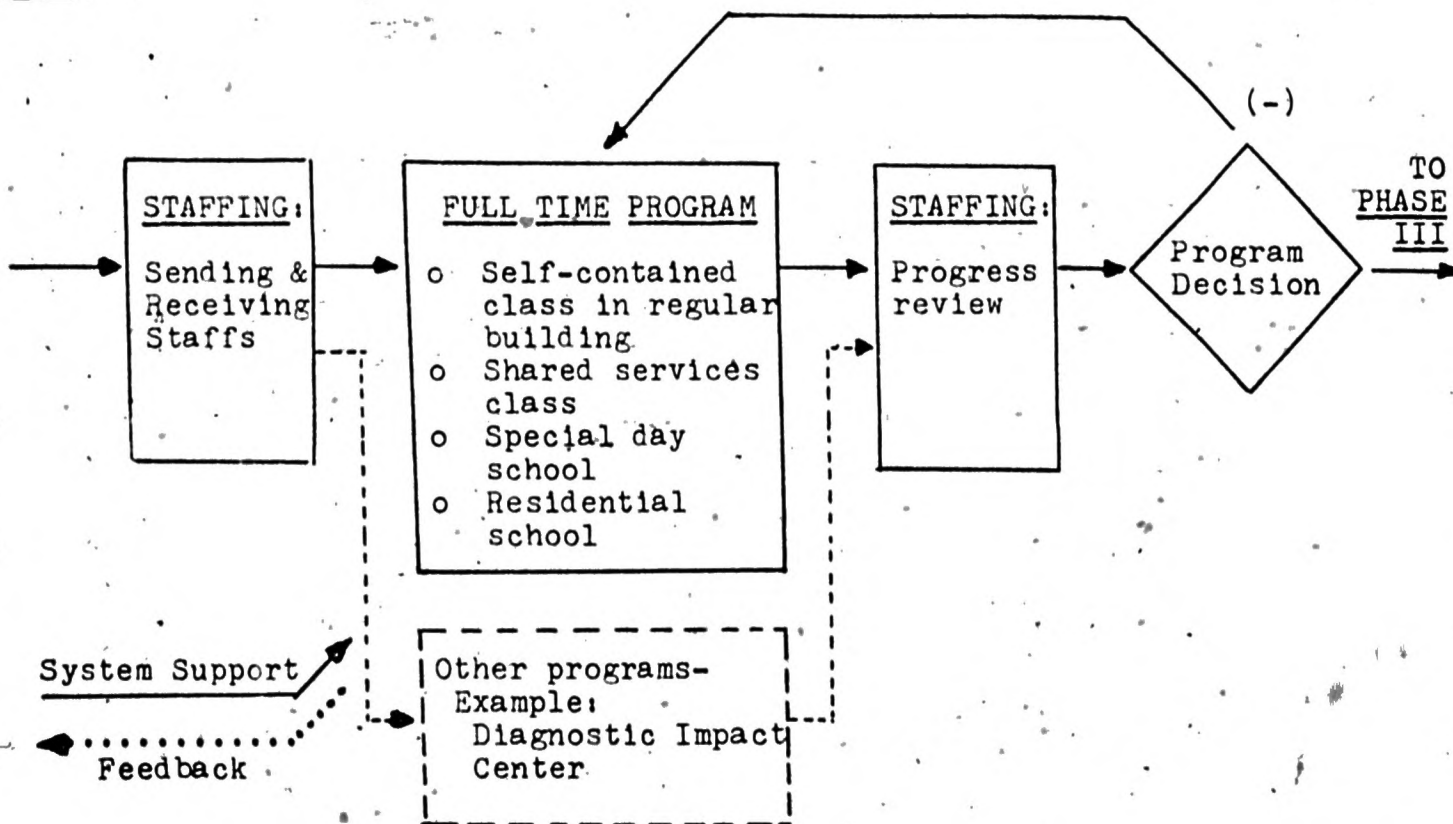
All have responsibility for helping to establish PUPIL GOALS!

System Support

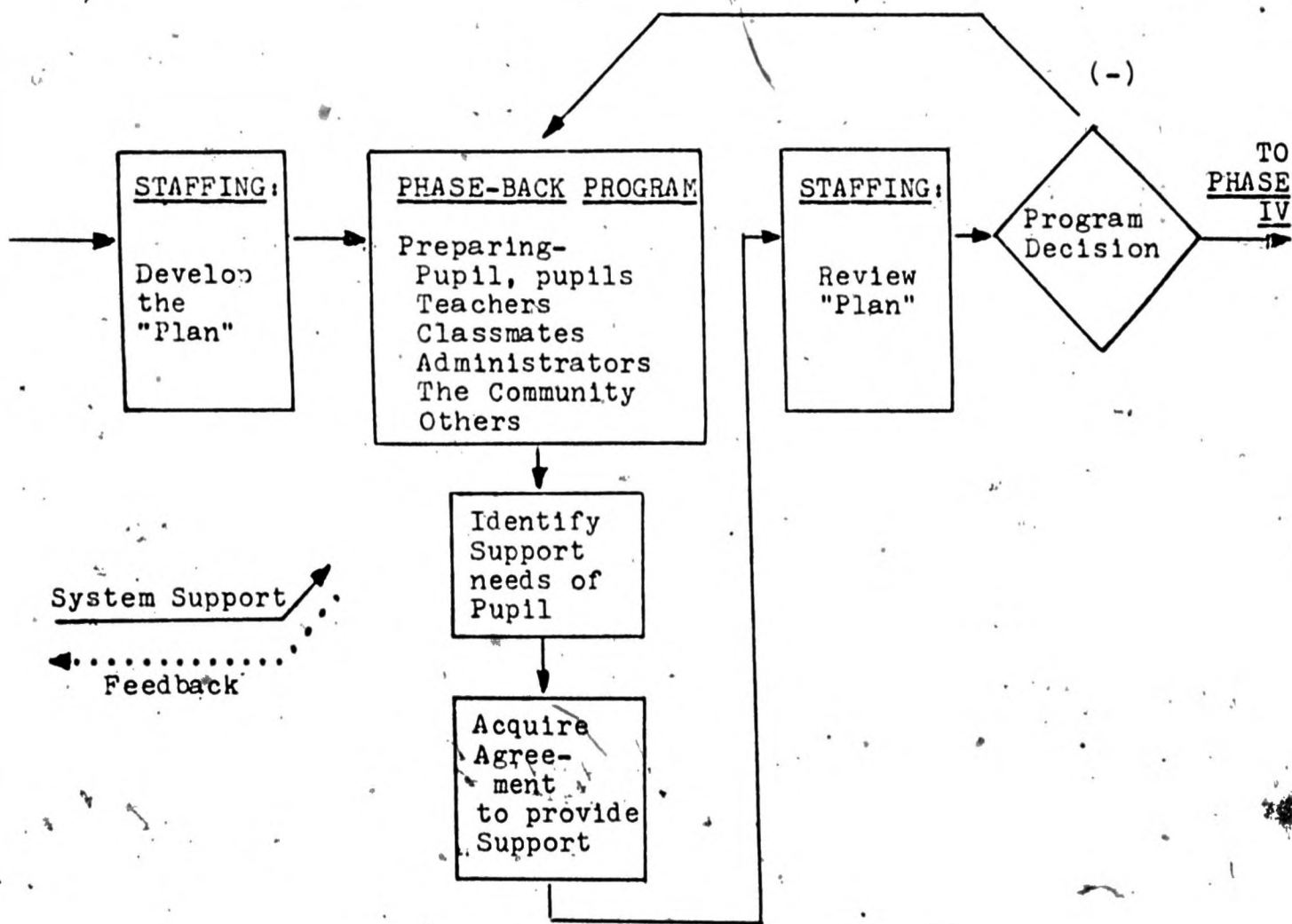
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Feedback

PHASE II S E L F - C O N T A I N E D C L A S S

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

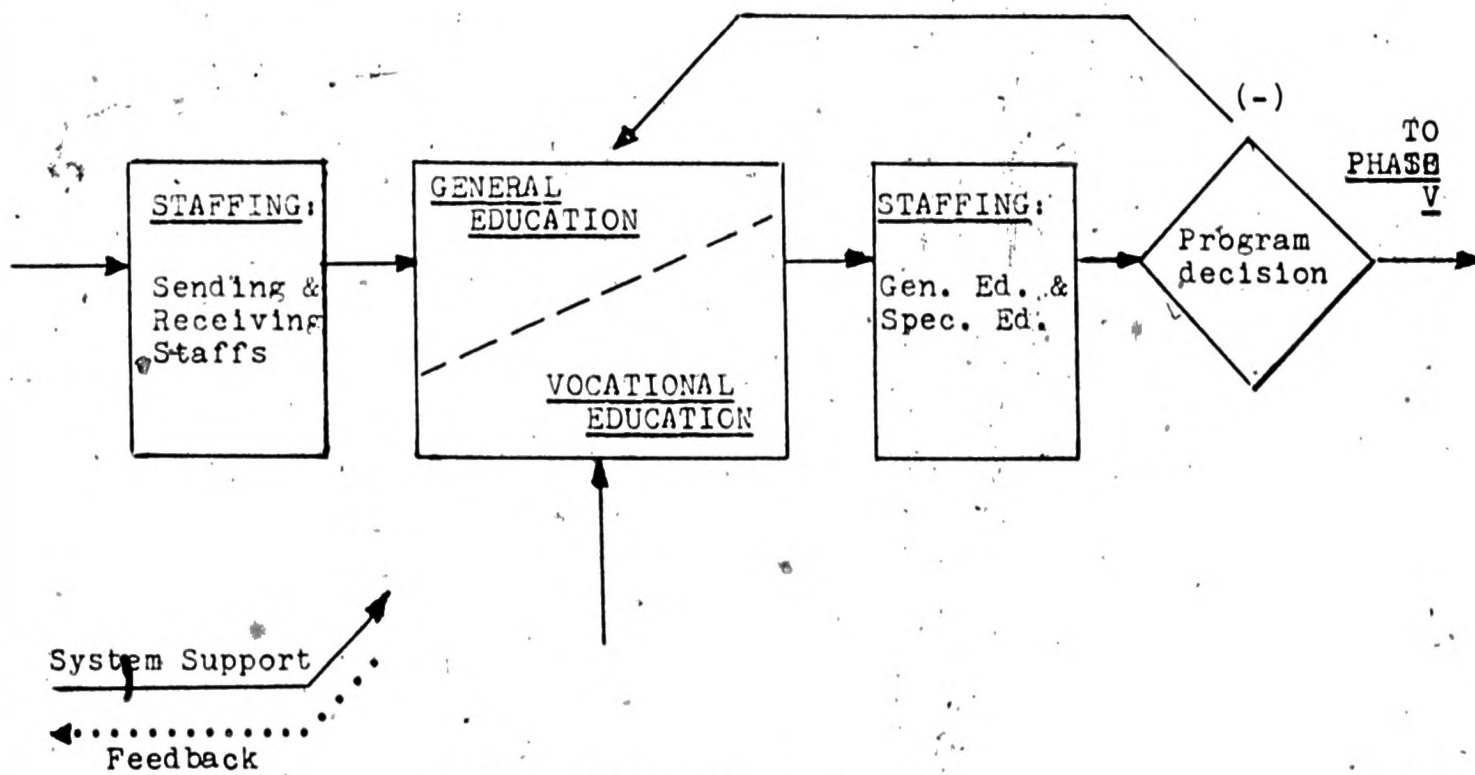


PHASE III P H A S E - B A C K
INTO REGULAR CLASS



PHASE IV LEVEL 1 SUPPORT

IN GENERAL EDUCATION



- o Resource rooms
- o Itinerant teachers
- o Specialists
- o Special materials
- o Other

PHASE V LEVEL -2 SUPPORT
 IN GENERAL EDUCATION

