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ABSTRACT

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 requires mainstreaming, or the education of handicapped children with regular students, to the greatest extent appropriate. Although the provisions of the law call for each student to be assessed individually and provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the costs associated with these requirements too often encourage schools to fit the children into programs that are designed to handle categories of disability rather than individual learning needs. Flexible, specific IEPs planned in collaboration with parents should be part of clearly defined, goal-oriented school programs. Support and leadership from administrators is a key to the success of mainstreaming. Administrators should be concerned with establishing good communications, developing mainstreaming skills through staff development programs, modeling and encouraging an attitude of respect and acceptance toward the disabled, fostering participation in planning by all affected, and informing themselves of the options available for making school services and facilities suitable for mainstreaming. (Author/PGD)

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# SCHOOL MANAGEMENT DIGEST

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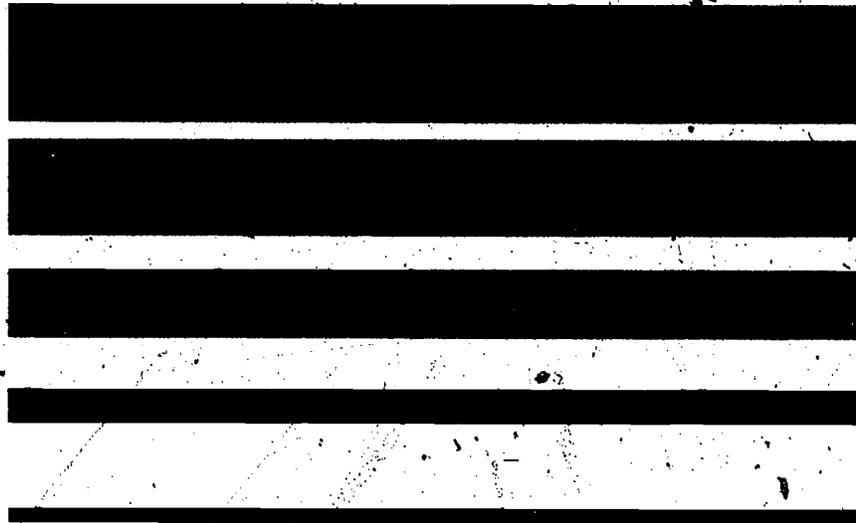
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# Administration of Mainstreaming



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**ERIC** Clearinghouse on Educational Management

# Administration of Mainstreaming

David Coursen

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## FOREWORD

Both the Association of California School Administrators and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management are pleased to cooperate in producing the *School Management Digest*, a series of reports designed to offer educational leaders essential information on a wide range of critical concerns in education.

At a time when decisions in education must be made on the basis of increasingly complex information, the *Digest* provides school administrators with concise, readable analyses of the most important trends in schools today, as well as points up the practical implications of major research findings.

By special cooperative arrangement, the series draws on the extensive research facilities and expertise of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. The titles in the series were planned and developed cooperatively by both organizations. Utilizing the resources of the ERIC network, the Clearinghouse is responsible for researching the topics and preparing the copy for publication by ACSA.

The author of this report, David Coursen, was commissioned by the Clearinghouse as a research analyst and writer.

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## WHAT IS MAINSTREAMING?

Mainstreaming, the practice of educating handicapped children with regular students, has been the subject of an intense legal and educational debate. As a practical matter, that debate was resolved in 1975 when the federal government mandated that handicapped children be placed in the mainstream as fully as possible. Despite the law, mainstreaming can be difficult to put into practice; as a result, it is sometimes seen as a radical departure from traditional educational practices.

The idea of educating all children together is probably as old as the public school system itself. Early educators, however, quickly recognized that some children, most obviously the blind, the deaf, and the mentally retarded, had special instructional needs that could not easily be met in the regular classroom. One attempt to solve this problem was to provide such children with a separate system of "special education" designed specifically to meet those needs. Unfortunately, in practice, special education was often imperfectly implemented, with the result that it did not always meet its goal of serving the handicapped. For example, Miller and Miller point to recent evidence that fewer than half of all handicapped children were receiving an appropriate education.

Mainstreaming is not only an educational question, but a legal one as well. Turnbull explains that the legal origins of the mainstreaming movement can be traced to the civil rights movement, particularly to the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that black students could not legally be segregated into school systems that were "separate but equal" to those provided for whites. A number of subsequent judicial rulings expanded that principle to include handicapped students and the "separate but equal" special education system.

Finally, in 1975, the federal government enacted Public Law 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (commonly known as PL 94-142), which guarantees each handicapped child the right to a free public education in

the "least restrictive environment." The philosophy behind this legislation is expressed in California Senate Bill 1870 in the following terms:

Individuals with exceptional needs are offered special assistance programs which promote maximum interaction with the general school population in a manner which is appropriate to the needs of both.

For some students, with only mild educational handicaps, the regular classroom qualifies as the least restrictive environment. Other students, however, require special help if they are to succeed in the mainstream; it is up to the schools to provide such help.

Perhaps because the actual decision to mainstream was made by judges and lawmakers, who offered few practical suggestions for putting the new policy into practice, mainstreaming, like special education before it, has not always been effectively implemented. Some schools simply followed the letter of the law—obeying the rules, filling out the forms, and shuffling students from special to regular classes, without really considering what is best for each child. True mainstreaming has *two* aspects, of which regular class placement is only one. The other is making sure that such placement is appropriate and benefits the child. Indiscriminately placing all handicapped children in regular classrooms is a futile policy that is not, properly speaking, mainstreaming at all, but what some writers call "maindumping."

Educators who have tried real mainstreaming agree that it can succeed, but only if it is implemented with a sincere commitment to following the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law, by providing each child with the educational services that can best meet his or her needs. In the absence of such a commitment—and the resources to follow up on it—mainstreaming is little more than a meaningless catchword, a formula for changing, but not for improving, the way schools educate the handicapped.

*Mainstreaming* is a very general term that can be used to describe a wide variety of educational arrangements. A useful definition rules out "maindumping" and emphasizes the range of educational services that may be needed to meet the individual needs of each special student. One such definition is that used by the National Association for Retarded

Citizens (NARC):

- NARC considers mainstreaming to be a philosophy or principle of educational service delivery which is implemented by providing a variety of classroom and instructional alternatives that are appropriate to the individual educational plan for each student and allows maximal temporal, social and instructional interaction among mentally retarded and non-retarded students in the normal course of the school day.

This definition highlights mainstreaming's diversity, its emphasis on service, and its commitment to contact between regular and special students. Mainstreaming, however, extends to all handicapped children, not merely the retarded. The "handicapped" include those with conditions listed by Ballard and Zettel as follows:

mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, or children with specific learning disabilities who by reason thereof require special education and related services.

As this list suggests, a mainstreaming program can provide services for a very broad range of children. Attention to the mere mechanics of providing such services, however, may miss the point. While specific skills are important, an appropriate attitude—a belief that all children are entitled to appropriate quality education—is at the heart of mainstreaming. Ultimately, no amount of knowledge or technical skill can make up for a lack of belief in the process.

Because the right attitude is crucial to successful mainstreaming, it is important to understand the legal, political, and historical background of mainstreaming. After we have examined those areas, we will look more specifically at how mainstreaming works, what makes a program successful, and how an administrator can contribute to that success. Our discussion will rely on educational literature and on the transcripts of interviews we conducted with educators who have been involved with successful mainstreaming programs.

## THE LAW

PL. 94-142, which makes mainstreaming as we have defined it the law of the land, needs to be understood as the culmination of a legal process that has been underway for many years. In the broadest sense, mainstreaming rests on the principle that is the cornerstone of democracy: "All men are created equal." Historically, the abolition of slavery, suffrage for women, the civil rights movement, and the equal rights for the handicapped movement can be seen as stages of the process of extending that principle to all Americans.

### The Educational Imperative

To understand how the education of the handicapped became a question of equal rights, we need to understand how the handicapped have traditionally been served by the schools. Many experts agree that, for a number of reasons, special education never lived up to its promise as a way of educating the handicapped.

One problem was that special education did not reach many of the students it was designed to serve (it, unlike regular education, was not compulsory). Miller and Miller cite government statistics indicating that even recently fewer than half of the nation's handicapped children were receiving appropriate educational services. Nearly a third of the handicapped were receiving inappropriate services, while more than a fifth were receiving no services at all. Other handicapped children presumably had not even been identified. Clearly, for all these children, equal educational opportunity was far from a reality.

Even more seriously, special education did not always do a good job with the students it did serve. In many cases, the educational needs of children segregated from the mainstream were largely ignored, and special education itself was often little more than a "dumping ground" for problem children.

In some ways, the very practice of segregating some stu-

dents from others is harmful. Handicapped children suffer because they are not being prepared to function in the mainstream of society, where many of them will be once they leave school. Normal students, too, are being shortchanged when they are placed in an artificially homogeneous environment that does not reflect the diversity of American society.

### The Problem of Labels

One of the most serious objections to traditional special education is that it is based on the use of labels to classify children—as “retarded” for example. On the face of it, such a label can serve only a limited purpose, since it implies that there is something “wrong” with the child without really suggesting how to meet that child’s educational needs. More insidiously, it falsely suggests that children with the same label have identical needs. In fact, children with low IQs, for example, do not all display common learning characteristics that can be met in identical ways. The process of developing labels is cumbersome and imprecise. Keefe and others report that in 1974 California had twenty-eight special education categories and some children did not fit into any of them.

Labels do not always provide much information about how to help a child, but they do have stigmatizing effects that may actually harm a child. The label of “retarded,” for example, implies inferiority in a way that can give a child a negative self-image and reduce his or her self-respect. Worse, labels create expectations about how children are likely to perform, expectations that can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. In one of the seminal essays on mainstreaming, Dunn points to studies indicating that the way a child is labeled strongly influences what teachers expect of that child.

The label “retarded” is highly arbitrary, since it describes a condition that can, in many cases, be “cured” by a change in definition. In addition, as Meyers points out, most retarded children are labeled as such only by the schools, and their condition does not mean they are unable to function in society:

Well over half of the school’s EMRs (educable mentally retarded) are, however, able-bodied children who have not been identified as different before school attendance.

and who, upon leaving school, are not differentiated from the co-workers of equivalent status and residence.

Even more damaging arguments can be made against the methods that are actually used to label children. Traditionally, the chief indicator of retardation has been the IQ score. However, the IQ tests' cultural, social, racial, and even sexual biases, according to some writers, make their value in determining the course of a child's entire educational career open to question.

Traditional labeling systems have been particularly unfair to members of minority groups. Kendall points to evidence from the sixties showing that over half of those classed as mentally retarded were from minorities. A later study, he adds, shows that 75 percent of those minority "retarded" had, in fact, been mislabeled. Not surprisingly, minority groups have expressed considerable resentment toward the whole system of special education.

Novotny discusses some other reasons misclassifications may occur. A child may have a combination of a reading problem and a marginally low IQ. Students of low socioeconomic status who are disruptive or cause problems in the classroom or who cannot learn from specific teachers, curricula, or instructional materials may also be mislabeled. In addition, tests may be inappropriately selected or administered. Keogh and her colleagues further suggest that parents have generally not been involved in screening and placement decisions. This means there have been few safeguards to protect children from mislabeling or its consequences. Further, while it was easy to mislabel a child, in practice it was often quite difficult to undo a placement decision by returning a child from a special to a regular class setting. Thus, if anything, Turnbull understates the case when he summarizes the objections to labeling:

... classifications are too rigid, they serve almost no educational purpose, they result in misclassifications, they are racially discriminatory in motive or effect or both, they have an adverse effect on school success, they stigmatize. . . .

It is easy to see how these educational problems could also become legal problems. Misclassifications, arbitrary placement decisions, or second-rate services in effect deny

certain citizens, the handicapped, their civil rights to equal opportunity, equal protection, and due process. As people became conscious of these facts, there were, inevitably, legal attacks on the special education system that fostered such abuses. A series of court decisions and state laws expanded the rights of handicapped students until, as indicated above, PL 94-142 mandated substantial changes in the way handicapped students are educated.

### Provisions of the Law

As an attempt to provide a comprehensive remedy for a wide range of educational and legal problems, PL 94-142 was, inevitably, a broad complex law with a variety of provisions. It is important to remember that, in essence, its intent is simple. As NARC puts it, the law "mandates that handicapped children, including mentally retarded children, be educated with the non-handicapped to the maximum feasible extent, leaving the burden of proof on the local school to argue for a special class for any individual in its jurisdiction."

Various writers explore how the law attempts to achieve these goals. One useful discussion is that of Ballard and Zettel. Their discussion divides the law into five main points.

First, the law requires every state and locality getting federal money to provide free, appropriate education to all handicapped children. All services, including residential placement if that is what is most appropriate, must be provided at no cost to parents.

Second, an IEP (Individualized Educational Program) must be provided for each child in time for each school year. This is a written statement defining the child's present achievement level, establishing annual goals, and stating criteria for judging whether those goals are being met. The law further mandates the involvement of parents, teachers, special educators, and, where appropriate, the students themselves, in the establishment of the IEP. The IEP is, however, a management tool rather than a specific instructional plan.

Third, students must be placed in the least restrictive environment. This is a mandate for education with the non-handicapped to the maximum extent appropriate. It is not a

requirement that all children be placed in regular classrooms, nor does it abolish any specific educational setting. The IEP is an essential tool in defining what the least restrictive environment is for each child.

Fourth, the law guarantees children the right to due process in all placement decisions, including identification, evaluation, and placement. Parents not satisfied with the IEP are entitled to a fair hearing in which an impartial panel can review placement decisions and assessment.

Fifth, the law also attempts to ensure that assessments are not based on racially or culturally discriminatory procedures. Test materials must be provided in the child's native language or natural means of communication. In addition, no single procedure can be used as the sole basis for decisions. Assessments must be "multi-faceted, multi-sourced, and carried out by qualified personnel."

Miller and Miller discuss some other aspects of the law. They point out that it makes public education compulsory for all children, including the handicapped; formerly, special education was available to children at the discretion of their parents. In addition, the law "recognizes the need for considerable funding, the need for uniform priorities, and the need for enforcement mechanisms."

Although PL 94-142 is a sweeping mandate for change, it is only an outline that, as Miller and Miller observe, is short on "substantive details." As a result, it has often been misunderstood as a mandate for the wholesale return of handicapped children to regular classrooms, where they originally had the problems that led to their special placements; without special help, many of them will have the same problems again. Most schools attempt to provide some special services but, as Vandivier and Vandivier point out:

... sufficient funds are seldom available to finance a full range of special education options that extend across twelve grades, numerous schools, and several areas of exceptionality. . . . As a result, the child is provided with whatever program exists, rather than with the kind he needs.

As the authors point out, this means that "instead of fashioning a program to meet the individual needs of the child, in actuality the child is molded to fit into the available program."

## California's Master Plan

One effort to address this problem has been made in California, where until recently two different special education delivery systems were used to meet the requirements of PL 94-142. The older, categorical program aimed to provide services to handicapped children according to educational disability categories. The newer approach, embodied in the Master Plan, is to provide services on the basis of students' learning needs. The recently enacted Senate Bill 1870 abolishes disability categories and appropriates special education moneys only for the Master Plan, with the explicit intent that the Master Plan be implemented in all remaining school districts during a two-year transitional period beginning with the 1980-81 fiscal year.

The Master Plan's principal advantage over the categorical approach is its ability to coordinate the delivery of educational services. Each district that is large enough to provide special services to all its handicapped students will develop a plan for doing so. Smaller districts may combine into groups for the purpose of jointly providing a full range of services for all the handicapped. A third possibility is for a district to join with its county office in submitting a plan. Any plan should include a coordinated identification, referral, and placement system and should clearly assign responsibilities for administering programs and providing services.

As a result of the Master Plan and SB 1870, even students in small districts will have access to a full range of educational services. This means students will be offered the most appropriate type of special assistance, rather than having to settle for what is available. This system also means that expensive services will not be unnecessarily duplicated.

As described by Keefe and others, Master Plan schools have at least one full- or part-time resource specialist on campus, assisted by a full-time instructional aide. The resource specialist coordinates referrals, schedules eligibility and placement hearings, conducts assessments, and performs diverse other functions. In addition, he or she instructs special students directly and works closely with regular classroom teachers in planning each special student's mainstream education.

## MAINSTREAMING IN ACTION

The process of mainstreaming for children with handicapping conditions should be a step-by-step movement from sanctuary to freedom. The issue is not one of segregation v. integration; it is a question of providing individual program planning. Anything less than that will lead to chaotic doctrinaire approaches which may satisfy statutory requirements, fiscal imperatives, and administrative flow-charts but fail to meet the needs of children. . . .

Chapin

The most common way of offering a full range of special services within a school is by utilizing a separate facility, often called a resource room, where the handicapped can go for extra help. Some children will spend almost no time in the resource room; the only special service they need is the help the resource specialist provides to the regular teacher in planning the educational program. Other students will need to spend some time in the resource room working on specific skills or subjects with the resource specialist or aides on a one-to-one or small-group basis. Still other students will do most of their academic work in special classes but take PE, art, home economics, shop, or driver's education in regular classes. Some students will spend all their time in a self-contained special classroom in the regular school building.

### Individualized Instruction Plan

A resource room program can be effective only when it is coordinated with what is done in the regular classroom. At the very least, this means the regular class teacher must work closely with the resource specialist in planning the child's educational program. The instrument for providing this joint planning and for designating an appropriate instructional strategy for each child is the individualized education program (IEP).

California law (SB 1870) states that an IEP for a student should be developed by a team that includes a representative

of the school's administration, the pupil's present teacher, and one or both of the pupil's parents or their representative. When appropriate, the team may also include the student and persons who have been involved with the assessment process.

The IEP team, the law continues, meets at least annually to review the pupil's progress and the current appropriateness of his or her program and placement. Meetings may also be held when a pupil has been assessed, when a placement decision is to be changed, when a pupil fails to progress satisfactorily, or when a parent requests a meeting.

If the parent does not consent to all aspects of the IEP, those components to which the parent does consent will be implemented immediately, while the components in dispute may become the basis for a due process hearing. In general, such a hearing may be held at the request of the pupil, the parent, or the public education agency involved when there is a proposal to change—or a refusal to change—the identification, assessment, or educational placement of the child, or when the parent refuses to consent to an assessment or an individualized education program. Due process hearing procedures include the right to a mediation conference, the right to examine student records, and the right to a fair and impartial administrative hearing at the state level.

Once a parent consents to a pupil's assessment, an IEP must be developed within fifty days (excluding July and August) of that consent. When a pupil has been referred twenty or fewer days prior to the end of the school year, the IEP must be developed within thirty days of the start of the following year.

The IEP team meets and develops a written statement governing the pupil's program. Such a statement should indicate the pupil's current performance levels and identify annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives. It should also specify the services a pupil requires, the extent to which the pupil can participate in regular programs, and the starting and finishing dates for special programs and services.

Finally, the IEP must specify criteria, procedures, and schedules for assuring that short-term objectives are being met. For secondary school students, an IEP may make appropriate references to vocational training and to alterna-

tives to standard graduation requirements. For students whose primary language is not English, linguistically appropriate goals and objectives should be identified. An IEP may also concern itself with extended school year services and with the transition of a pupil into the regular class program.

Dougherty notes that a good IEP should be both flexible and specific, describing the child's levels of performance, academic achievement, social adaptation, prevocational and vocational skills, psychomotor skills, and self-help skills at the beginning of each year. Scott recommends that evaluations be based on a child's developmental, social, and educational histories, test results, and psychological and medical reports. Comments from specialists, past teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, and others should also be considered.

Using this information, the IEP can establish annual goals that are based on the pupil's special abilities, past rate of learning, behavioral patterns, inclination to cooperate, and severity of handicap.

The best IEPs are the most collaborative; only when the IEP team works together in partnership is it possible to sketch a picture of the child's needs, based on his or her home situation and history as well as on school records. Unfortunately, this type of collaborative working relationship is not always easy to develop. On the one hand, an uncertain parent can easily defer to the expertise of professional educators and play only a nominal role in planning. On the other, educators confronted by sometimes cumbersome paperwork and the threat of parents requesting a fair hearing can easily become defensive about the process.

One secret to working with parents effectively is good communication. Several of the educators with whom we talked reported that they were already working to communicate openly and directly with parents *before* the IEP process was established; with a strong commitment to good communication, they were having few problems in the new environment.

The IEP process involves a lot of record-keeping and other paperwork. When questions arise about placement decisions, particularly when parents request a fair hearing, the various forms and records the school has kept are the best

assurance of an equitable outcome. Still, it is clear that IEP forms can be a burden. Sometimes they are quite long. As Bill Jones told the writer in an interview, some of the forms are still being refined, so they are changed frequently, sometimes several times in the same year. He wondered if *all* the paperwork was necessary: "Does anybody read all the forms? We fill out five copies, and you can't even read the last two. Those go to the Central Office. It makes you wonder." Several interview subjects suggested reducing IEP red tape by streamlining forms and procedures.

### Setting Objectives

School mainstreaming programs should have clearly defined standards and expectations. Scott mentions some of the goals of one program: academic success for half of the mainstreamed students and improved skills, decreased disciplinary referrals, and increased participation in extracurricular activities for all the mainstreamed students. As this list suggests, mainstreaming is not merely an academic strategy; it is important for schools to foster the emotional growth of handicapped children and help them acquire social and life skills they can take with them when they leave the school setting. Hedberg suggests the breadth of mainstreaming's goals:

As professional educators, it is our job to prepare these children for adult life. This may mean developing appropriate curriculum in teaching daily living skills, decision making, social interaction, and sexuality for the handicapped.

Hedberg goes on to suggest that students be taught such social skills as "introductions, body image, conversational styles, and interviewing techniques. Students can talk about their feelings, learn to accept constructive criticism, and make decisions." Hedberg also stresses the importance of "the development of self-esteem, group recognition, independence from parents, acceptance, and a place to practice social skills." Students also need to understand their own handicaps so they can make their needs known.

In establishing objectives for a mainstreaming program, it is important to understand the limitations, as well as the

possibilities, of special services. Wullschleger and Gavin report that trainable retarded children "appear to need a more specialized structure and self-contained environment than can be provided in a traditional high school." They also report problems with students whose emotional problems make their behavior unusually erratic, seriously defiant of authority, or truant so often their absences disrupt instructional continuity. In an interview, Mildred Skehorn pointed out that expectations must always be geared to the ability level of each student: "For some students, it will take a long time to learn. In some cases, they never will earn their diplomas, but at least we'll take them as far as they can go on the skills continuum."

#### Placement

One of the most important considerations in any mainstreaming effort is making good placement decisions, with the right person being mainstreamed in the right way and at the right time. As Mayris Baddell put it in an interview: "We give a great deal of thought to placement decisions. If we move too fast, that can mean trouble." White points out that such a careful attitude is not typical; decisions to reintegrate are often based on nothing more than casual observation and an instinctive feeling that "I think he's ready." White recommends a more systematic approach, using reliable behavioral, social, and academic measures of readiness. In an interview, Nona Kirk suggested one way of judging a child's readiness for a certain placement is how well it works: "If it's a true least restrictive environment, the mainstreaming shouldn't take a superhuman effort. If it does, we need to ask, 'Should the child be mainstreamed in this way?'"

The other part of the placement equation is finding the right teacher for each child. Some classroom teachers have unusual empathy with the mainstreaming process; many others have (or can acquire) the skills and knowledge to be successful in individualizing instruction for special students. The importance of finding and identifying such teachers cannot be overstated. As Scott explains, "The main element in successful programs . . . has been the classroom teacher who is convinced that these students can learn, who has the

high standards of expectation, who wants to teach them, and who knows how to teach them."

It is also important to understand that not all teachers can meet these criteria. Kirk emphasized to the writer the need to consider the needs of such teachers:

Some teachers can't handle mainstreaming. They should have some kind of rights. They didn't choose special education, they weren't trained for it, and in some cases they're just not suited for it. For example, a very structured teacher might make some kids hyper-active.

### An Ideal Classroom

Sapon-Shevin outlines an ideal mainstreamed classroom. In it, students would be intentionally heterogeneous, with no stigma attached to being "different." There would be peer tutoring and cooperative instruction of mainstreamed students, often on a one-to-one basis. The emphasis in the class would be on cooperation rather than competition. Teachers would be provided with extra help, and there would be interdisciplinary programming and efforts to use specialists in the regular classroom, not just the resource room. In general, the experience the school offered, like its curriculum, would be nondiscriminatory, communicating positive attitudes about the differences among people.

### Grading

The question of how to grade students in the mainstreamed classroom can be tricky; different educators suggest different solutions. Walberg recommends basing grades on participation as a way of increasing the motivation and sense of accomplishment of handicapped students; with this arrangement good students will still do well, learning as much as they do in a more competitive environment. Grades can also be based on how much progress each student makes. However, Hawkins-Shepard cautions that some standards should be kept; a grade such as an "A," denoting excellence, probably should not be given simply for effort.

Recent California legislation mandates that IEPs must

specify differential proficiency standards for pupils whose handicaps or disabilities prevent them from attaining the district's regular standards. However, diplomas can be awarded only to pupils who have met the district's proficiency standards.

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## THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

"Supportive principals are really important to mainstreaming. They can make it or break it." Kirk in an interview

"Strong administrative support has been the key to the entire effort." Wullschleger and Gavin

"If mainstreaming is to be more than an administrative arrangement, it must be fully and morally supported by the principal." Oaks and others

"The ultimate success of mainstreaming is particularly dependent on the leadership of building principals." Gage

"The administrator makes or breaks the program." Hedberg in an interview

These quotations, a mere sample of such comments from the educational literature and interview remarks, suggest what a key role the administrator plays in the mainstreaming process. On one level, mainstreaming is primarily an organizational matter, and the principal, as the school's leader, is in a crucial position to make the decisions that will determine if the program succeeds. But if there are various steps a principal can take to promote mainstreaming, the most important thing is to have—and display—a belief in the process. Modeling a positive attitude is particularly important to Hedberg, who told the writer the principals' "biggest contribution is just being in favor of the program. Instead of just endorsing it, they can let everyone know they feel good about having kids with learning disabilities on campus."

Moore defines the principal's role in these specific terms: "The role of the principal is to give support, encouragement, and information as well as positive supervision to students and teachers." Thus the principal is both a supporter and a leader of the program, responsible for seeing that the right services are provided and that the entire school believes in those services and is committed to their success.

Gage suggests that the task of making mainstreaming work is, in many ways, like that of making any educational

program succeed. The first priority for the administrator is facilitating good communication throughout the school. Opening lines of communication between regular and special educators is a good place to start; most writers agree that coordinating the efforts of these two groups is absolutely essential to effective mainstreaming. More generally, the principal should know what staff members are doing and should make sure peoples' objectives and expectations for the program are well understood.

Gage also recommends that administrators understand some of the anxieties teachers may feel about working with special students. Instead of believing that working with the handicapped requires the "patience of Job," teachers should realize that, with proper preparation and support, mainstreaming is something most teachers can handle. The best way for the administrator to foster this awareness is by conveying a positive attitude about mainstreaming.

Principals should also actively lead inservice and staff development programs needed to give teachers the skills and self-confidence to work successfully with mainstreaming. Scott describes the general aims of one staff development effort:

The purpose of the staff development sessions was to help the teachers understand and cope with problems and responsibilities which were a part of the inclusion process, to help them better understand the kind of child a retarded educable student is, and to help them change their attitudes toward retarded educable children more positively.

An inservice program should have several additional objectives. Teachers need, above all, to understand mainstreaming, its advantages, and its potential abuses. They should also know something about PL 94-142, why it was enacted, and what it means for educators. As Gage notes, it is particularly important for teachers to "recognize that the legislation is a way to provide your current students with a wider range of educational options, not a scheme to dump problems on your school." Teachers should also be familiar with the characteristics and needs of handicapped children, with adapting curriculum to meet those needs, and with ways of evaluating students and individualizing instruction.

Some knowledge of peer tutoring and behavior modification can also prove useful, and teachers should realize the importance of working with others.

To meet these broad objectives, California regulations require that teachers who work with the handicapped must be given the equivalent of at least one day of training concerning the needs of exceptional children. As of this writing, proposed regulations would require that such training cover the following specific areas: differences and similarities between exceptional and nonexceptional students; nonbiased student assessment, including awareness of cultural and linguistic factors; implementation and evaluation of short- and long-term educational objectives based on IEP goals; application of diagnostic information toward modifying regular curriculum and materials; and current special education legislation. (For updated information, please contact the California State Department of Education.)

California SB 1870 specifies how a staff development program should function. It should offer school personnel a wide range of development activities, including small-group work, self-directed learning, and systematic observation of other classrooms or schools. Time, including released time, should be set aside for such activities. The program should be designed and implemented by school personnel, continually evaluated and modified, and adequately financed. Principals and other administrators should be participants in one or more of these development activities.

### Shaping Attitudes

The principal should be a leader in shaping the attitudes teachers and regular students develop toward handicapped students. It is crucial to encourage respect for children and to create a climate where each child will be treated as an individual with unique growth patterns, abilities, attitudes, and interests. The principal should also emphasize the importance of creating high expectations for handicapped students, since children so often become what is expected of them.

Because increased contact between regular and special students can produce strong emotional reactions, the princi-

pal must take steps to control potential problems. One way of doing this is to provide opportunities for positive interactions between handicapped and regular students. Dougherty also urges principals to use the influence they have as school leaders:

Principals can do this by explaining the multitude of handicaps in an assembly program, counseling with groups of students as the problems occur, making statements in the school publications, or involving parents through PTA meetings or civic occasions.

Ultimately, principals are also responsible for making sure handicapped students have the tools they need to be successful in the mainstream environment. Walberg suggests teaching students "survival skills" such as "binder organization, notetaking, listening, study techniques, school rules, and, above all, whom to go to for which kinds of help and when." Students should know how to organize their time and should understand that they are responsible for the consequences of their behavior. Hawkins-Shepard believes that the ability to ignore mockery, among other preparatory skills, can play a role in mainstreaming success. Special students must also be oriented to a school's physical plant. For example, building routes should be outlined for blind students and fire drill procedures established for the deaf.

Two of our interview subjects described interesting approaches to preparing regular students for mainstreaming. Jones described a program where each class is given a presentation about how people learn, different learning styles, and the types of environments people need to learn. Hedberg referred to a program where every freshman social studies class has a one-week curriculum on the handicapped as a social unit in our culture. The unit is, she commented, "a way of inservicing students and teachers at the same time."

Just talking can help, too, as Walberg notes: "Finally, teachers can help disabled students talk about their disabilities and learn how to put others at ease, thereby alleviating much of the hesitation that students feel about working with their handicapped peers."

Hawkins-Shepard advocates directly confronting the differences among students rather than ignoring them. One way of doing this is to show movies about handicapped

people (such as *Johnny Belinda*, about a blind girl, and *Charly*, about a retarded man) as starting points for discussion. With all these efforts, the best thing a principal can do is to support them by visibly declaring, "This is valuable. This should be done."

Another step the principal can take toward the shaping of positive attitudes is to make special education—resource rooms, special students, and even self-contained special classes—as much a part of the regular life of the school as possible. Several writers recommend making the special education program an integral part of the school with the same status as other departments. One pitfall to avoid is segregating resource rooms in a single area. If students can move easily and inconspicuously between the regular class and the resource room, special education will be less likely to develop an image as "separate."

The wrong arrangements may actually inhibit successful mainstreaming. Marilyn Miller described for the writer the problems of mainstreaming in a school that departmentalized at the fourth-grade level. "Special students have to adjust to working with a resource specialist and two or three regular teachers; that's just too much to ask of a handicapped child that age."

In her interview with the writer, Hedberg suggested forming a club of special students to participate, like other groups, in such school activities as building a homecoming float. Another approach is to locate special education facilities at various places throughout the school, rather than in a cluster together.

### Participative Planning

Oaks and others and Clark both recommend that planning for mainstreaming be done on a participative basis. As Clark puts it, "All personnel . . . who will be involved with handicapped children should be allowed to participate in the planning of the program." This is, he emphasizes, one of the most important elements in a successful program. Broad participation assures, first of all, that the program is tailored to meet and reflect the needs of a specific school situation. In addition, people who have helped create a program are likely

to be satisfied with it, confident that it will work, and committed to its success.

Another group that plays an important role in mainstreaming is parents. Coordinating children's educations with their home experiences is only possible if there is good communication between parents and the school. Here, again, the principal sets the tone. With open and honest communication and a commitment to making parents genuine partners in the child's education, school-parent cooperation will not be difficult. Conversely, if parents are treated as adversaries, whose participation in the IEP process is little more than mandated meddling, no legal or administrative safeguards can make educational planning a shared thing.

### Special Services

The administrator should become familiar with the various ways of providing special services. "Peer tutoring, special classes, developmental reading, remedial reading, group counseling, vocational counseling, and the Resource Room" are some of the special services Walberg mentions.

Klopf emphasizes the need for organizational guidelines that clearly spell out how special services are to be provided. White recommends objective ways of deciding if a child is ready for integration and clear procedures for moving the child from one setting to another. Individual responsibilities for various aspects of the integration process should be well defined, with clear guidelines for selecting the teacher or classroom to which the child will be mainstreamed. Clark adds that it is important to monitor mainstreaming carefully, to determine how well the program itself is working and how it is affecting the social and academic progress of individual students. When a placement decision does not work out, there should be ways to move the child to a more appropriate environment without delay. The principal should also make sure that teachers have time for inservice training and for planning and conferences related to special services. Classes with special students should be small enough to permit effective individualization.

Administrators need to be aware of the various resources — financial, educational, and human — that are available to

help special students. They should also encourage their staffs to become familiar with these services and how to use them. Walberg suggests some ways available resources can be used: "Special education funds can provide books and materials for teachers to use in adapting their curriculum; parents can provide extra tutoring, and secretaries and custodians can provide very real career exploration opportunities." What the principal really needs to do is think creatively about what is available and how it can be used to improve the special services the school already offers.

### The Physical Environment

Appropriate physical facilities are also important to successful mainstreaming. A literature review on mainstreaming by Applied Management Sciences, Inc. discusses how important the right environment can be. Obviously, a school building with a lot of steps may cause problems for physically handicapped students. Mainstream classrooms should be suited to the needs of the blind and physically handicapped. Some more specific physical aspects to consider include:

- accessibility of entrances
- accessibility and safety of equipment
- provision for storage space for special equipment
- accessibility and placement of furniture

### The Need for Continuing Education

The emphasis in much of the literature on *teacher* inservice obscures the fact that not all *administrators* are currently equipped to lead mainstreaming efforts. When interviewed, Jerry Kristol observed that some administrators don't really understand the mainstreaming concept or the background and implication of PL 94-142. Both Kristol and Sally Hedberg suggested to the writer that administrators may need inservice training for mainstreaming just as much as teachers do. As Hedberg put it:

We just accept the idea that all administrators are into special education and glad to have small classes mixed with large ones, but it's not always true. We need to offer inservice and let administrators get their feelings

about mainstreaming out in the open. In many cases, I think we'll be surprised at just how mixed those feelings are.

Kristol added that it may not be enough merely to make inservice programs available: "Our county offers the programs, but the administrators just don't turn out. They would for discipline, but not for mainstreaming; they just don't consider learning about it a high priority."

Just as some administrators are skeptical about mainstreaming, so a number of researchers have expressed reservations about the ways in which this practice is most commonly implemented. The resulting debate is the subject of the following chapter.

## THE DEBATE CONTINUES

Despite the legal mandate, educators still disagree whether mainstreaming is the best way of educating the handicapped. One reason for the debate may be that mainstreaming was adopted by lawmakers, in response to social and legal pressures, rather than by educators, in response to evidence of its effectiveness.

Traditionally, the mainstreaming debate has focused on the question of whether handicapped students were better off in self-contained special classes or in the regular classroom. Under PL 94-142, though, the question is no longer an "either or" choice between the two settings but a matter of deciding how to coordinate and combine special and regular class settings to create the most effective and least restrictive educational environment for each child.

Many of the most serious problems attributed to mainstreaming are actually the results of improper planning or inadequate support. NARC points out that legislated mainstreaming can actually be harmful when it forces mainstreaming at a pace the schools can't handle. This can lead to resentment of mandated changes; worse, without adequate support many handicapped children are sure to fail in the regular class setting. As a result, NARC recommends "that all mainstreaming efforts be implemented on the basis of systematic educational planning, performance monitoring and continuous evaluation of the educational efficacy of mainstreaming for individual students."

Vandivier and Vandivier point out the difficulty of providing a wide enough range of educational services to meet the specific needs of each child. They add that mainstreaming becomes even more difficult at the secondary level, where teachers specialize in specific subject areas and may have less training in special education. The Vandiviers add that "exceptional children . . . often appear happier when subjected to reduced academic pressures and increased opportunity for success experiences that characterize most self-contained special classes."

Research-based evidence on the efficacy of mainstreaming is generally inconclusive. Although the terms have shifted in recent years, Novotny's wry observation is still largely valid today: "Several educational setting comparative studies have been conducted. Their findings reveal both integration and segregation are superior and of equal value."

Applied Management Sciences's literature review points out that not much research has actually been done to determine the efficacy of mainstreaming; most of the work that has been done is marred by bad methodology, questionable instruments, or limited scope. Many of the most important questions are still not answered, including:

- Who benefits most from mainstreaming?
- What does mainstreaming cost? (The authors reject the suggestion that mainstreaming is a "cost-effective alternative to special classes")
- What are the critical variables affecting the success of a mainstreaming effort? How important are peer attitudes? Is there a critical time (possibly at the preschool level) when mainstreaming makes the greatest difference?
- What is "success" in mainstreaming? Academic achievement? Social acceptance? Self-growth? Some combination of all these?

Ultimately the mainstreaming debate sifts down to a question of values: Is mainstreaming worth the cost? The conclusions to be drawn from research findings hinge on one's ethics. Consider, for example, the research findings of a study reported by Reese-Dukes and Stokes. Their work focused on how retarded students are accepted socially by their nonretarded classmates. Their findings, they say, tend to corroborate the results of a number of recent sociometric studies indicating that nonretarded children "prefer" other nonretarded children over retarded children, and often overtly reject retarded children in a classroom setting. These authors' observations certainly indicate that children have prejudices against the retarded. Does this mean that mainstreaming should be abandoned as hopeless or pursued more vigorously as a way of combatting such prejudices?

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, mainstreaming is a broad educational goal, rather than a specific instructional arrangement. Placing handicapped children in regular classes is only a single element, however important, of the mainstreaming philosophy embodied in PL 94-142. What is essential for true mainstreaming is that each child be educated in his or her least restrictive environment; whether or not that environment actually includes the regular classroom.

Successful mainstreaming requires the best efforts of all school personnel. In particular, regular and special teachers need to master new skills and learn to work together as partners in providing each handicapped child with the most suitable combination of educational services. The principal must be active in many areas, supporting teachers, facilitating good communication with parents, and leading the entire school in the direction of successful mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming may be a challenge to educators, but it is also a valuable opportunity. At its best, mainstreaming has the potential to change and improve the way schools educate all children, not just the handicapped. For example, as teachers learn to provide individualized instruction to handicapped children, they also become more aware of, and better able to meet, the individual needs of their other students. In the long run, though, mainstreaming's greatest promise may lie in its potential for promoting true equality for all Americans. As Sapon-Shevin explains, mainstreaming can

be used as a catalyst for change in school and in society, by changing our conceptions of differences in people and by helping people to perceive the potential worth of every member of our multi-faceted society.

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