INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE EDUCATION OF THE HEARING DISABLED

In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Education of Hearing Disabled Children in Amherst, Nova Scotia

OCTOBER 1986

Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped
Amherst, Nova Scotia
B4H 3Z6

CONTENTS

CURRICULA AND THE MAINSTREAMED HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENT

Gary Owen Bunch, Associate Professor
York University

Curricula concerns in the area of mainstreaming differ from those in other areas of education of the hearing impaired. Mainstreamed students use curricula designed for their hearing peers or, as necessary in support situations, those developed for hearing impaired students. For many, regular curricula need only be minimally modified to meet particular needs. For others, although routine curricula are employed without change, the pace of progress through curricula is altered. However, these modifications and alterations do not solve all problems. Major concerns related to curricular content and progress in school remain and must be considered by responsible educators. Among these concerns are the type and degree of mainstreaming best for the student, the advantages and disadvantages of mainstreaming, mainstreaming criteria, predictors for success, the relationship between the specialist teacher of the hearing impaired and the regular classroom teacher, programme co-ordination, approaches to curricula, and decision-making in mainstreaming. This paper will deal with type and degree of mainstreaming, purposes and limitations of mainstreaming, and approaches to curricula.

Type and Degree of Mainstreaming

Contemporary educational philosophy assents that exceptional individuals should have the right to education under the same conditions as their non-exceptional peers. Bitter (1976) placed the argument in a constitutional framework affirming "that unnecessary segregation and labeling violate the rights of exceptional children to equal educational and social opportunities". Leslie (1976) placed it in a legal framework noting "The court's decision is clear. Hearing impaired children have the right to a mainstream education - regardless of expense". Interpretation of legislation in the United States and in Canada have left us in no doubt that the hearing impaired student has the right to appropriate education, and that the mainstreamed situation may be deemed appropriate for many.

What does "mainstreamed" mean? The term is bandied about loosely as is "integration". At times these are viewed as interchangeable; at others, as possessing distinctly different meanings. The distinction between them is not merely semantic. Most authorities would agree that "mainstreaming" connotes the actual presence of a student in a classroom with normally hearing peers. "Integration" may bear this meaning but, also, may mean education in the same building as normally hearing peers, but in a separate classroom. For the purposes of this discussion mainstreamed will be used to indicate full-time education with normally

hearing peers as well as placement with normally hearing peers for specified subjects only.

A third term about which discussion may take place is "assimilation". Ross (1976) referred to assimilation as "the hearing impaired child's ability to function and profit from the normal school environment much as his normally hearing peers do - although certainly some supportive help is not precluded". Nix (1976) observed that some hearing impaired students are assimilated to such a degree that they are not reported in educational surveys of the hearing impaired population, and are not recorded as being in any type of special programme. An "assimilated" hearing impaired student, by general definition, is one whose academic and social skills do not set him apart from his normally hearing peers. As Ross (1978) has noted, even when this student does not respond well to auditory signals, such response is put down to lack of attention or misbehaviour by the teacher rather than to hearing impairment. This level of achievement and acceptance is considered to be the pinnacle of mainstreaming. Maximum success is won with minimal need for intervention by a specialist teacher of the hearing impaired. No significant change to the routine curricula of the class is required.

Not all students mainstreamed full-time are assimilated and make acceptable academic and social progress. A number are able to cope with the academic aspect of school life successfully, but do not fare well socially. This is especially true of those with limited oral communication skills and those with minimal interpersonal skills. Conversely some hearing impaired individuals are strong socially, but encounter significant difficulty with the academic requirements of the mainstreamed situation. Antia (1982, 1985) and Ross (1978) have noted a tendency among those with limited communication skill to socialize with like others rather than their hearing peers. On the academic side Nix (1976) and Ross (1976) have emphasized that the student who does not achieve may be receiving concurrent education, but that simple physical presence in a class should not be misconstrued as mainstream education. For these students specific alterations to regular curricula, or the pace at which regular curricula are covered, are necessary.

The standard method of dealing with less than complete mainstreaming is to arrange for out-of-mainstream class support. This may range from a short, regular period of withdrawal for academic work to placement in a special class or resource room situation for the major part of the school day (Brill, 1978). The time spent in the support situation and the subjects selected for mainstreaming should be determined on the basis of child need and ability. In the regular classroom the curricula of that classroom, with appropriate modification, is to be used. In the support situation specialized curricula may be required.

However, what should be and what actually occurs are different at times. Various dynamics affect the appropriate placement and support of many students. Among these are lack of sufficient time for specialist

staff to support mainstreaming adequately, lack of acceptance by regular class teachers, lack of support by administrators, lack of interpreters for mainstream support, difficulty in accurately monitoring and reporting progress, and differences of opinion among responsible parties. Those planning for the mainstreaming of hearing impaired children must deal with these factors directly and sensitively. How they are handled will relate significantly to the curricula offered the child and the degree of success met in the mainstream classroom.

Purposes and Limitations of Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is regarded by others as well as by many parents as advantageous for hearing impaired students. It is not altogether clear, however, whether the primary advantage falls on the side of academic achievement or socialization with normally hearing peers. The ultimate purpose of experiencing education with, and as, non-impaired peers combines both of these.

According to Ling and Ling (1978) "The longer a hearing impaired child gainfully attends a regular school, the better are his prospects of integrating fully into society at large". This statement appears to presuppose that both academic and social benefits will accrue from attendance in a regular school. A qualifier is included, however, in the word "gainfully". Attendance must not be simply for the purpose of attendance in a school close to the home, or for other children to see and accept the presence of hearing impaired individuals in society, or any other such nebulous reasons. Most professionals would agree with Ross (1976) who stated that the student "must be there for a purpose, and that purpose must be demonstrated superior academic and personal performance than that achievable in a special school or class setting", and Bitter (1976) who asserted, "the final determiner of whether mainstreaming is successful or not is dependent upon what happens socially, academically, emotionally and vocationally to the individual". The hearing impaired student is viewed as a rounded individual, a person with both social and academic sides. Teachers, regular classroom, resource room, or itinerant, provide this attention through curricula. These are the tools through which they work. For mainstreamed students the specific educational purposes to be achieved are those outlined in the various cognitive and affective curricula of the regular classroom in which they are placed. They must be able to achieve like their normally hearing counterparts or the mainstream decision must be questioned. If the student cannot deal with the curricula of the class, curricula which can be dealt with must be offered. To leave a student to deal with academic and/or social situations which are known to be overly challenging, is to discard the basic tenets of education and to accept the concept of mainstreaming for mainstreaming's sake alone. This does not mean that such decisions should not be made. It does mean that those making the decision must know what their purposes are, and must be prepared to offer curricula which will promote these purposes while, at the same time, supporting other aspects of the student's class life in appropriate fashion.

That not all consider academics and socialization to be of equal importance is apparent in McGee's (1976) statement that "The purpose of mainstreaming is the promotion of natural contact and meaningful communication among hearing impaired and normally hearing children in age appropriate peer groups. A secondary purpose is to heighten the expectation levels of achievement for and by hearing impaired students". If socialization is to be paramount, a curriculum designed to encourage and achieve socialization is necessary. If academics are to be secondary and the primary concern is not to achieve at the level of the class, curricula appropriate to the student's level of functioning are necessary. This thought cannot be stressed enough. Responsible professionals must know why a hearing impaired individual is mainstreamed. Next they must bring appropriate curricula to bear to achieve these purposes.

The choice of appropriate curricula is a major task. For a limited number of hearing impaired individuals, the social and academic curricula of the regular class are fine. There is no problem. For many other students the curricula are almost appropriate. With certain modifications they will be fine. For still others specific curricula are acceptable with minimal modifications, but other curricula are inappropriate or require major modification. An observant professional will note these variations and come to conclusions regarding the appropriateness of curricula.

Modifying curricula and substituting appropriate ones for the inappropriate is another task, however. Most teachers are not well trained in curriculum modification and design. While able to recognize a curricular problem they are unable to act with certainty and accuracy to deal with it. One of the most significant challenges for the regular class teacher and the specialist teacher is the provision of curricula in forms and at levels to meet the abilities of hearing impaired students. This point was highlighted by French and MacDonnell (1985) who surveyed regular class teachers to determine questions they would pose to specialist teachers of the hearing impaired regarding their mainstreamed children. Of the 113 responses in eighteen categories approximately 74 were questions related to dealing with content curricular matters and 11 related to socialization. Difficulty in dealing with academic and social curricula is a major limitation in mainstreaming.

Other limitations of a curricular nature are perceived by a number of professionals. Among these are:

1. A mainstreamed hearing impaired student added to an already sizeable class strains teacher time (Freeman, Carbin, & Boese, 1981).

2. Students may have a restricted choice of subjects (DeSalle & Ptasnik, 1976; Kindred, 1976).

3. Students often must give up free time for additional study and assistance (Kindred, 1976).

4. Limited language and reading skills create a need for tutoring (Kindred, 1976).

5. Close, frequent contact between specialist staff and regular class teachers is necessary.

6. Administrators, who must support the programme, frequently are unversed in any aspect of hearing impairment.

7. Communication among students may be difficult.

8. The hearing impaired student misses much routine teacher-students interchange which other students pick up (Mathis & Merrill, 1978).

9. Support staff knowledgeable in curriculum and hearing impairment are limited.

These problems and limitations demand active response by educators well aware of specific needs and difficulties and with an adequate background in both hearing impairment and curriculum development.

Approaching the Curriculum

Little evidence is available that educators have put forth substantial effort in writing, re-writing, or modifying regular curricula for mainstreamed hearing impaired students. The assumption appears to be that students will learn the regular curriculum and that the regular class teacher, with some assistance from a specialist teacher, will be able to modify the curriculum appropriately. What is available is a series of mentions of the general problem, global teaching ideas, and a few relatively extensive examinations of curricular concerns. Hinkle and White (1979) stress that flexibility will be needed to seed the special needs of the hearing impaired into the regular curricula, that an individualized teaching style may be best, and that past, present, and future curricula must be rationalized. Kolzack (1983) notes that mainstream modifications in a number of areas, including curriculum, will be necessary. Culhane and Mothersell (1979) suggest useful, general ideas for the development of material and media. Modifications such as careful enunciation, additional tutoring, specific seating, and assigning a buddy are suggested by Reich, Hambleton, and Klein (1975). The difficulty of integrating curricula for the hearing impaired with curricula for other children is noted by McGee (1976). Methods for promoting social communication skills and interaction skills in support of the social curriculum are outlined by Antia (1982, 1985). Mathis and Merrill (1978) provide a list of eighteen points delineating a guideline for consideration of curriculum and programme philosophy. Such varied and sketchy mentions of curriculum and the mainstreamed hearing impaired students are characteristic of this area of education. Yet it is obvious that teachers desire more information on curricula and how to approach them in the mainstream situation.

In an attempt to define curricular concerns, and to explore teacher responses to these concerns Bunch (1986) designed and distributed a questionnaire addressing various apsects of curriculum. Respondents were practicing itinerant teachers of hearing impaired students covering the elementary and secondary grades. Questions and summaries of responses are noted below.

1. How did you become familiar with the curricular needs of mainstreamed students?

The routine response was that knowledge was gained primarily through experience with mainstreamed students. The majority of itinerant teachers first considered the problem when they were faced with it. Once aware of the necessity to meet specific needs a variety of techniques such as reviewing regular curricula for problem areas, informal observation of students in the regular classroom, attending workshops on regular curricula, and formal testing to establish functional levels, were used. No teacher noted that the topic had been addressed during their specialist training.

2. Do your students follow the regular curricula for the classroom into which they are mainstreamed? Please name curricula and texts.

All teachers indicated that regular curricula were followed. A number qualified their responses with terms such as, "as closely as possible" and noted that some curricula were "very difficult". When noting actual curricula and texts, teachers focused on those in mathematics. A limited number mentioned basal reader series and novel study. A significant minority noted that some students were on individual programmes and followed curricula other than those used for most students. Texts and curricula named were clustered at the lower elementary levels for the most part.

3. Do you use curricula for the hearing impaired to support your mainstreamed student? If so, how?

Auditory training curricula were used by most itinerant teachers to work on the listening skills of their students. To a lesser degree speech curricula and language curricula for the hearing impaired were employed. Some teachers drew on the resources of nearby residential schools for additional, specially designed support materials such as high interest - low vocabulary books. A number observed that curricula and materials specifically designed for the hearing impaired were too limiting for their students.

A withdrawal system was routinely used where special curricula were employed.

4. Do mainstreamed children need special curricula? To what degree?

This question obtained a variety of responses. Rather than answering the question directly, most teachers noted that it depended on the individual ability and communication skills of the student. A number noted that some children were not mainstreamed for all subjects and, when not mainstreamed, required special curricula. Indications of greater need for special curricula at the high school level and for children experiencing problems was given. A general preference for a slower pace through the regular curriculum rather than a special curriculum was obvious.

5. To what degree does the regular classroom teacher accept responsibility for curriculum modification?

Respondents routinely noted that the acceptance of responsibility for curriculum modifications varied from teacher to teacher. Few accepted complete responsibility. The majority shared responsibility with the itinerant teacher and a significant minority saw no reason to alter the regular curriculum or depended completely on the itinerant teacher.

6. How do you handle the language-reading needs of your students when they must read assigned regular texts?

Responses to this query fell into two main categories. One involved pre-teaching vocabulary to reduce difficulty when a regular text was required. Suggestions such as using parents in this process, placing vocabulary in an appropriate context, reviewing whole passages, and highlighting key vocabulary were given. The second major system was to re-write material and teach it in advance of a lesson. Suggestions here included paraphrasing, summarizing, providing a glossary or thesaurus, and using parents as assistants.

7. What are the most significant curricular difficulties you face in your work?

Teaching at a slower pace to ensure understanding while simultaneously keeping up with the class was the primary difficulty noted by itinerant teachers. Related to this central point were the necessity to become familiar with a wide range of regular curricula, avoidance of overloading the student, and pre-teaching needs.

8. What are the most significant curricular benefits you find in your work?

This item typically called forth responses which indicated the satisfaction found in assisting a hearing impaired student to keep pace in a regular classroom. The ability of a hearing impaired youngster to be "normal" in an important aspect of life was valued.

9. What are the major curricular adjustments you and your students must make?

Language and reading demands and the amount of content to be covered created the greatest need for adjustments. These called for adjustment of personal timetables and/or adjustment to the pace of the timetable. Particular mention was made of the demands experienced at the secondary level. Confounding the general situation was lack of time to think enough about topics, or to ask enough questions, and inadequacy in background information expected of regular students.

10. At what grade levels are regular curricula most satisfactory or most unsatisfactory?

Responses almost uniformly concurred that regular curricula are most suitable and manageable at the primary levels, become somewhat awkward at the mid-elementary level, become quite difficult for many students at the upper-elementary level, and present severe challenges for most students at the secondary level. Difficulties varied from student to student but, as reading and language needs increased, all experienced need for increased intervention by regular class teachers and itinerant teachers.

11. For which subjects are regular curricula most satisfactory or unsatisfactory for your students?

Mathematics, art and spelling were noted as most satisfactory especially at the lower levels. Family studies, environmental studies, and physical education were listed as well. History and geography were noted as particulary unsatisfactory with language and reading mentioned as well. A general growth away from satisfactory as grade levels progressed was indicated for most curricula.

A number of general points emerge from this information. They are:

1. Teachers of the hearing impaired do not feel that their training dealt sufficiently with the topic of curriculum and the mainstreamed student.

2. As much as possible regular curricula should be utilized even though they may be too difficult for the student. When curricula are too difficult specific responses are helpful.

a) Slow down the pace of instruction.
b) Pre-teach vocabulary and language.
c) Re-write lessons using paraphrasing and summarizing.
d) Use parents or other aides to preview material.

3. Primary grade regular curricula call for the least change. As the student goes through the grades curricula are less and less suitable. Unsuitability relates primarily to language and vocabulary levels.

4. Mathematics, art, and spelling are the most satisfactory areas for mainstreaming. History and geography are the least satisfactory.

5. Curricular materials and approaches designed specifically for hearing impaired students are too limiting for mainstreamed students. Only aural habilitation curricula appear appropriate for the majority.

6. Mainstreamed hearing impaired students require the support of specialist personnel. A major function of the specialist is explaining the needs of the student to the regular teacher so that teacher can accept responsibility for instructing the child.

SUMMARY

Information such as the above will not surprise most itinerant teachers. While they may not have structured it in their minds, they are familiar with the general advantages and difficulties of dealing with curricula and the mainstreamed child. However, it is useful to document such points. Emphasizing central concerns will focus our attention and enable us to deal more expeditiously with these concerns. Dissemination of the information will make it easier to advise regular class teachers and administrators of general difficulties and approaches in this area of education. Lastly it may impress on those professionals responsible for teacher preparation in hearing impairment that specific attention must be paid to curriculum and the mainstreamed student.

References

Antia, S. (1982). Social interaction of partially mainstreamed hearing impaired children. American Annals of the Deaf, 127, 18-25.

--------. (1985). Social integration of hearing impaired children. Volta Review, 87, 279-289.

Bitter, G.B. (1976). Maximum cultural involvement for the hearing impaired: Environmental impact. In G.W. Nix (Ed.), Mainstream education for hearing impaired children and youth (pp. 87-100). New York: Grune & Stratton.

Brill, R.G. (1978). Mainstreaming the prelingually deaf child. Washington, DC: Gallaudet College Press.

Bunch, G.O. (1986). Mainstreaming and curricula. Unpublished questionnaire.

Culhane, B.R., & Mothersell, L.L. (1979). Suggestions for the regular classroom teacher. In M.E. Bishop (Ed.), Mainstreaming: Practical ideas for educating hearing impaired students (pp. 98-119). Washington, DC: Alexander Graham Bell Association.

DeSalle, J.M., & Ptasnik, J. (1976). Some problems and solutions: High school mainstreaming of the hearing impaired. American Annals of the Deaf, 121, 533-536.

Freeman, R.D., Carbin, C., & Boese, R.J. (1981). Can't your child hear? Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.

French, D.B., & MacDonnell, B.M. (1985). A survey of questions posed by regular classroom teachers integrating hearing impaired students in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. ACEHI Journal, 11, 12-23.

Hinkle, W., & White, K.R. (1979). Assessment and educational placement. In M.E. Bishop (Ed.), Mainstreaming (pp. 74-97). Washington, DC: Alexander Graham Bell Association.

Kindred, E.M. (1976). Integration at the secondary school level. Volta Review, 78, 35-43.

Kolzak, J. (1983). The impact of child language studies on mainstreaming decisions. Volta Review, 85, 129-137.

Leslie, P.T. (1976). A rationale for a mainstream education. In G.W. Nix (Ed.), Mainstream education for hearing impaired children and youth (pp.23-37). New York: Grune & Stratton.

Ling, D., & Ling, A.H. (1978). Aural habilitation. Washington, DC: The Alexander Graham Bell Association.

Mathis, S.L., & Merrill, E.C. (1978). The deaf child in the public schools. Danville, IL: Interstate Printers.

McGee, D.I. (1976). Mainstreaming problems and procedures. In G.W. Nix (Ed.), Mainstream education for hearing impaired children and youth (pp. 135-145). New York: Grune & Stratton.

Nix, G.W. (Ed.). (1976). Mainstream education for hearing impaired children and youth. New York: Grune & Stratton.

Reich, C., Hambleton, D., & Klein, B. (1975). The integration of hearing impaired children in regular classrooms (Report No. 142). Toronto, Ont.: Board of Education.

Ross, M. (1976). Assessment of the hearing impaired prior to mainstreaming. In G.W. Nix (Ed.), Mainstream education for hearing impaired children and youth (pp. 101-108). New York: Grune & Stratton.

--------. (1978). Mainstreaming: Some social considerations. Volta Review, 80, 21-30.