INTERNATIONAL SCAN OF ISSUES:

Children with Disabilities and Their Families

A Discussion Document for the
6th International Congress on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilites in the Community

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EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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The place of people with disabilities in our world is undecided. Traditionally, they have been marginalized in society and treated as second class citizens or less. However, voices from all sectors of society now argue that people with disabilities have the same place in society as anyone else. They are simply members of the wider community with the same rights, responsibilities, needs, and strengths. A second view exists, however; that many of those with disabilities have no rightful place in the mainstream of regular society and that accommodations made to assist them in societal interaction are acts of charity which may be rescinded. The Jerry Lewis' of today, well intentioned as they may be, fit comfortably into the well-worn ethic of helping those with disabilities from the same charity motivation noted by Davidson, Woodill, and Bredberg (1994) in their analysis of images of disability from the 19th century.

Society continues to struggle with its commitment to do what is necessary to bring about a world which is not divided on the basis of characteristics such as gender, race, and ability. It is a struggle begun long ago and likely to go on long into the future. In our view the struggle around those with disabilities will be decided in favour of equity in human rights and participation in society. Nonetheless, we know that the conflict will continue for some time yet. We have but begun the battle.

The education system is a centre in this struggle, an eye of the storm. Over the past century or so, children who differ from the majority of their peers in terms of physical, sensory, emotional, and intellectual characteristics have gained access to the margins of education (Bunch and Valeo, 1997). Most commonly, this access has been to different settings than for those not labelled as disabled. Though the right of all children to education has been legislated in some countries and is being advocated in others, in most countries students with disabilities do not have the right to be educated in the same classrooms as their non-disabled friends and neighbourhood peers.

The translation of the right to education into actual practice varies from child to child within the majority of educational systems. The primary determining factor is degree of challenge in one or more of the categories mentioned above. When first faced with the understanding that society believed that children with challenges should have access to the education system, educators responded with what has now become known as special education. It was believed up to quite recently that a student with disability needed a protected environment in which to learn; a place away from the jeers of other students; a place where special programs could be brought to bear; a place with special teachers and special equipment; a place where the child with disability would enjoy the security of being with like others. There was absolutely nothing wrong with this thinking - within the context of the time. After all, society had not previously attempted to educate large numbers of those with disability. The development of segregated special education provision was based on the best understanding of educators, psychologists, the medical field, governments, and parents. Those who worked to develop, improve, and maintain special education services were, and are, dedicated, hard working, and well intentioned. Many students received needed assistance in special education schools and classes. Many were challenged to learn as well as they could. The development of segregated

education was a boon to parents and children and a progressive step by a concerned society.

But that is the story of yesterday. We are no longer in the context of that time. Today, a growing number of educators, advocates, parents, and individuals with disability are persuaded that, though special education provision was a necessary starting place, new understanding suggests that it would be inappropriate to be satisfied with what has been achieved to date. They point to the success of programs that include students with disabilities in the regular classrooms of community schools, the same schools their sisters, brothers, and friends attend. They point, as well, to research which suggests that special class placement, while undertaken for the best of reasons, has not proven to be academically and socially stronger for the average student with disabilities, than would be regular class placement. In fact, research increasingly documents higher levels of academic and social gain through experience in regular classrooms of neighbourhood schools. That is the story of today.

Not everyone agrees with this analysis of progress. Curt Dudley-Marling and Don Dippo (1995) suggest that much of contemporary thinking is still "fundamentally conservative in that it functions to preserve ideological practices by reinforcing taken for granted assumptions of schooling" (p. 413). Peter Evans, in a study of inclusive education provisions in eight countries undertaken by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (1999), points out that there is no supportable educational rationale for special education, and that it is only lack of political will and the interminable resistance to change within society that retard movement to an inclusive educational system. While these analyses favouring the inclusive approach may be accurate, we would add that many do not understand the benefits and potential of the inclusive approach. Nor do they understand the limiting, negative effects of remaining with educational solutions of the past. Thus, they remain tied to past belief and practice.

Problematics abound when one attempts to examine inclusion of students with disabilities. For instance, the very terms we use to refer to placement of these students within education are confusing. Three terms in particular are key to the present discussion. These are a) inclusive or inclusion, b) integration, and c) mainstream. Though these terms have different meanings, they often are used interchangeably in the literature, by educators, and by others. A school which includes all children with disabilities in regular classrooms on a full-time basis with their non-disabled peers is referred to most often as inclusive. However, some may use the term integration when describing the same situation. In this discussion, to reduce confusion, when integration is used as a synonym for inclusion, it will be followed by (inclusion). The term integration is more commonly associated with the special education model. Under this model a student may be assigned to a regular class, but spends only part of the day in the regular class and part in a special class or in a tutorial situation with a special education teacher. Whether integrated in the regular class or outside it under the integration approach, the special education teacher, not the regular class teacher, is considered responsible for the student. The term mainstream will refer to the regular classrooms of systems operating under the inclusive model or the special education model.

We now go on to discuss various aspects of the special education and the inclusive models.

PROBLEMATICS AND RELATED ISSUES

The majority of children with disabilities generally are denied, as world - wide practice, a full time place within mainstream education. In some countries, due to economic development, social unrest, and custom, many children with disabilities do not have opportunity to attend school at all. In others, educational provision is primarily at the special school level. In still others, which have developed pervasive special education structures and provisions, though the right to education is mandated by legislation, educators, politicians, and the judicial system continue to restrict right to mainstream educational experience in favour of segregated special school or class placement.

This is true despite research which increasingly documents that social and academic achievement for students with disabilities in inclusive mainstream settings are superior or equal to that of segregated special settings. Added to this is the fact that those who have implemented the inclusive approach under appropriate conditions find it both workable and economical.

The result of resistance to the inclusive education approach and continued reliance on segregated special education results in:

- Limitation of citizenship rights for children with disabilities.
- Second - best education for children with disabilities.
- Promotion of societal belief that children with disabilities lack capability and ensuing negative effect on acceptance and opportunity throughout the life span.
- Promotion of belief among regular classroom teachers that they hold no responsibility for children with disabilities and that children with disabilities are better off within segregated special education.
- Promotion of negative construction of self among children with disabilities with impact on self - realization and self - determination.
- Higher cost for the education of children with disabilities.

Limitation of Citizenship Rights

Advocates of inclusive education argue that denial of placement in mainstream classrooms of community schools is a violation of the rights of children with disabilities and an impediment to full citizenship. This argument is supported to some degree by recent government directed education policy in favour of integration. In the United States the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) with its provision for education in the least restrictive environment encourages mainstream experience. In Canada, a country with no federal involvement in elementary or secondary education, the policy of a number of provinces is that the mainstream classroom be the placement of first choice for all students. At the international level guiding statements such as UNESCO's *Salamanca Declaration* promulgated at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, 1994, and the March 1999 Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) research report *Sustaining Inclusive Education: Including Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.* with its findings of "few, if any, organizational, curriculum, or pedagogical reasons to maintain segregated [educational] provision within the public sector" (p. 2), plus the academic, social, and

economic possibilities of the inclusive model, argue strongly for the inclusive approach as a child's right.

Nevertheless, few educational jurisdictions have adopted the inclusive model, nor do they even enact the "least restrictive environment/mainstream classroom option as placement of first choice". A number of jurisdictions have stood so firm in their belief that children with disabilities can be consigned to special education placements, that the issue has been carried to the judicial level for resolution, thereby abandoning educational arguments in favour of "letter of the law" pronouncements. It is not the intention of this outline paper to review court decisions in various countries in detail. The point is that many educators resist movement to an inclusive, or even integrative model, despite provincial, national, and international statements in favour of mainstream class placement as the norm for all children and expressed parental desire for such placement for their children.

Second-Best Education

The United Kingdom Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE, 1998) states that inclusion results in good education. Specifically, CSIE posits that:

- Research shows children do better, academically and socially, in integrated (inclusive) settings.
- There is no teaching or care in a segregated school which cannot take place in an ordinary school.
- Given commitment and support, inclusive education is a more efficient use of educational resources.

Recent research supports the contention that inclusive education results in equal or higher achievement for students with disabilities when compared to the effect of special education. Studies by Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1995), Salend and Guhaney (1999), and by Evans of OECD (1999) document the academic and social advantages of inclusion. For instance, Baker, Wang, and Walberg cite the results of three meta-analyses of studies of the comparative overall academic and social effect of inclusive and special class placement. In a study of 50 separate research studies prior to 1980 Carlberg and Kavale found both academic and social effect size to be greater for inclusive placement. This finding was replicated by Wang and Baker for 11 studies between 1975 and 1984 and by Baker for 13 studies between 1983 and 1992. Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow (2000) summarize findings by McGregor and Volgelsberg (1998) who documented outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusive settings in 54 studies conducted between 1981 and 1998. The findings were:

Skill Acquisition

- Students with disabilities demonstrate high levels of social interaction in settings with their typical peers, but placement alone does not guarantee positive social outcomes.
- Social competence and communication skills improve when students with disabilities are educated in inclusive settings.
- Students with disabilities have demonstrated gains in other areas of development when they are educated in inclusive settings.

- Interactive, small-group contexts facilitate skill acquisition and social acceptance for students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Social Outcomes

- Friendships develop between students with disabilities and their typical peers in inclusive settings.
- Teachers play a critical role in facilitating friendships between students with disabilities and their typical peers.
- Friendship and membership is facilitated by longitudinal involvement in the classroom and routine activities of the school.

Research, however, is not fully consistent in support of this thesis. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) suggest that in specific instances the distinction between effect of the inclusive and special education models on the academic side is less clear. They argue that in some specific instances segregated special education provision has greater positive effect. Nonetheless, even a cautious analyst might agree with the authors of the recent *Manitoba Special Education Review* (1998, p. 110) that "Regardless of the variability of academic outcomes in the research, the literature generally concurs that integrating children with special education needs has a positive impact on social skill attitudes and relationships."

The fact that most educational jurisdictions continue to place students with disabilities on a full or part - time basis in special education settings in the face of such analyses indicates a high level of resistance to the inclusive model , even to the integrative model, and a reluctance to move away from the existing special school/class model.

Given the evidence of both research and the practically proven viability of the inclusive approach in areas where it has been implemented appropriately, the conclusion must be that many children with disabilities are being relegated to a second class education by educators who find change overly challenging, or who lack understanding of the potential of the inclusive model.

Perception that Children with Disabilities Lack Capability

Special education thinking reflects past educational understanding of disability. Within this understanding the majority of children with disabilities are judged on their academic and/or behavioural performance relative to mainstream students and deemed unable to learn in the mainstream. Thus, "over the past forty or fifty years we have convinced ourselves that some children are best assisted if we educate them in isolation from the general education community. They are best assisted if they are tested, the degrees of their deficiencies measured and enumerated, and if they are categorized and educated by their disability. They are best assisted if we surround them with others with similar challenges to their learning. They are best assisted if we provide them with teachers with special training for their measured, enumerated and labelled needs. To do otherwise would be to do less than was needed and appropriate" (Bunch, 1989).

This restrictive view of disability, with its reliance on medical model thinking and psychometric tools, remains with us today. The majority of today's teachers and their administrators grew up personally and professionally under the special education model.

The majority of our legislators attended schools in which special education was the daily reality for some of their peers. The special education model has been their conceptual and practical framework for working with children with disabilities, and they are loathe to let it go.

The inclusive education model challenges this *weltanschauung* of the educational universe. Advocates for inclusion see special education theory and practice as problematic. These advocates prefer the philosophy that all children learn best when educated together in the mainstream of school and community. "Basic to the advocacy of inclusion is the belief that there are not two separate groups of learners, divided by one group being 'regular' and the other group being 'disabled'. All students are seen to be part of the normal, daily, diverse citizenship of our cities, towns, and villages. There is only one set of effective teaching practices, not one set for regular learners and another for special learners" (Bunch, 1994). Within this view of education, resources previously directed to special education settings are still needed. Only the setting for education and the mind set of teachers will have changed, not the need for support.

Though this latter understanding of education for all children is becoming more widely accepted, systems which support a robust spectrum of full and part-time special education settings dominate. The view of disability as lack of personal capability remains strong. Most educators, not surprisingly, are convinced that the mainstream classroom is not an appropriate setting for students with disabilities, that their learning will not proceed as well as it would in a segregated setting, and that the learning of mainstream students will be impeded by the presence of students with disabilities. They continually insist that students with disabilities "catch up" to the other students or be placed elsewhere. Research and practical experience to the contrary is ignored or rejected. Few consider that continuing the special education model ensures that societal belief will remain that children with disabilities cannot learn. This belief will continue into adulthood affecting basic citizenship rights in areas such as employment, housing, and self-determination. The economic and social benefits to be attained through a more forward thinking and proactive view of education and disability will be lost.

Mainstream Teacher Rejection of Responsibility

Spread of the inclusive education approach depends on acceptance by mainstream teachers that they have both the responsibility and the professional ability to manage an inclusive classroom. As indicated by research, this is not the present view of the majority of mainstream teachers, nor particularly that of their leadership, nor that of future teachers.

Various researchers have explored educator attitudes toward inclusion by ability. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed 28 studies finding that "Although about half or more of the teachers felt that mainstreaming/inclusion could provide some benefits, only one third or less of teachers believed that they had sufficient time, skills, training, or resources necessary for mainstreaming/inclusion" (p. 59). In a Canadian study Bunch, Lupart, and Brown (1997) reached similar conclusions. The majority of Canadian classroom teachers looked on inclusion as theoretically attractive, but questionable due to heavy workload, lack of time to spend with children with disabilities, lack of professional preparation, and lack of leadership. Classroom teachers held more

pessimistic views than did administrators, resource teachers, and special education teachers. The only group matching mainstream teacher degree of pessimism was that of students studying to become future teachers. This does not bode well for the future.

Such findings on teacher attitude refer not only to students with disabilities. There is a comparative dimension to the studies. This dimension involves, by inference, mainstream students. Mainstream teachers' workload will be too great, time too short, and professional ability pushed too far if they are expected to include children with disabilities in addition to their nondisabled mainstream students. It is not a startling insight to realize that mainstream teachers view children with disabilities as an added responsibility. Children with disabilities are seen as an add-on, an extra which challenges the mainstream teacher too much. They are a group for which teachers can decline responsibility because there is another place (special school/class) for them to go and specialist teachers prepared to teach them. Under this view children with disabilities are the rightful responsibility of special educators who have the required professional preparation and experience and whose expertise is recognized and supported by the administrative leadership. As long as this view continues mainstream teachers will be able to decline responsibility for children with disabilities, and many will be relegated to full time or part time segregated settings.

School Experience and Negative Construction of Self

The experience of going to school provides all children in society with opportunity to evaluate themselves in comparison to their peers and to obtain a sense of what adults expect of them. It is believed that we see ourselves as others see us. In the instance of being disabled, society tends to see individuals with disability as stigmatized and broken in some way. This societal view, being apparent to the individual, is cognitively processed and incorporated into the sense of self. Construction of self for a person with disability need not be negative, but the manner in which the school experience has been structured may very well make it so.

This need not be the case. Under the inclusive model acceptance of individual ability and needs is a guideline. Each performs according to individual ability. Learning is judged according to that ability and not the ability of anyone else. All levels and types of learning are valued equally. There is no "catch up" assumption.Thus, solid effort on any task may be applauded for any child. Lesser effort may be met with strategies to engage the child in the learning task to the degree that the child is able. The learning of any student at any level is celebrated and supported. Basic to this approach to teaching and learning is the belief that we learn best in regular community settings, that we all learn at our own levels, and that we should not be expected to learn at the higher or lower levels of other students in any subject. The system strives to support all children in the development of a positive self-image through equitable treatment of all.

The special education model is commonly practiced as restorative in nature. The student is broken in some way and must be assisted to a higher academic and/or social state. The push, then, is to work on school-defined deficiencies in order to make the child as much like higher learning peers as possible. The manner of reaching this goal is to segregate the child, either in a special school/class or through routine withdrawal from regular class for special instruction. Under both options it is obvious to all concerned

that the child with disabilities is considered unable to learn as do her/his peers. Nothing could be clearer and more soul destroying for most children than to have daily reminders that they are so different that they cannot be with their peers.

Advocates of the inclusive model argue that most, if not all, children will see themselves negatively as a result of comparison to non-disabled peers. Whether or not the special education model results in individual progress, the possibility of children with disabilities seeing themselves as less than their peers is high. On the other hand, research and practice suggest that positive self-image is associated with the inclusive approach.

Higher Cost for the Education of Children with Disabilities

The situation regarding the comparative costs of the inclusive and the special education models requires more clarification. However, research appears to support the contention that the inclusive model is no more, or even less, costly.

A practical Canadian example may be found in the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board which celebrated 30 years of inclusive education during 1999. Elementary and secondary students, with dramatically few exceptions, are included in the regular classrooms of their community schools. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic Board, which educates approximately 30,000 students, receives the same government funding support per student as does any other Board in the province. The achievement levels of its students are comparable to those of nearby Boards which retain the special education model. The Board is not in debt. It has implemented the inclusive model in all its schools at no more cost than encountered by Boards which implement the special education model.

General research on including individuals with disabilities in integrated activities and environments suggests economic advantages (Hill, Wehman, Kregel, Banks & Metzler, 1987; Piuma, 1989). Evans (1999) in the OECD study of inclusive education in eight nations points to the difficulty of calculating costs and underlines the tentative nature of the study's findings, but goes on to state, "It is also generally agreed that inclusive settings are less expensive than segregated ones" (p. 28). A particular case in point in the OECD study was that of Iceland. Evans concluded:

> The cost per head of educating students with special needs was calculated by staff of Reykjavik education authority. This amounted to 1.4 times the cost of educating students without special needs if those with special needs remained in ordinary schools, 6.6. times if they were placed in special schools and units. The two groups were not, of course, directly comparable, as almost inevitably those in special schools and units were the ones with the greater difficulties. (p. 152).

IS MOVEMENT TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STALLED?

This question is asked at times by those hopeful that erosion of the special education segregated model is nearing an end and by those who advocate the inclusive model but fear that it may be losing its power. We are among those who view the analyses behind this type of question as short term and in direct conflict with the reality of a long term inexorable societal movement toward inclusion of people with disabilities in community. Our analysis (Bunch & Valeo, 1997) is that society, after beginning millennia in the past

with total rejection of the majority of those with disabilities from community, is incrementally moving toward inclusion. Even segregatory societal structures such as segregated education can be seen as steps toward inclusion given the fact that prior to segregated education most people with disabilities were excluded from education and community completely. In the longer term, movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms of community schools continues.

Nevertheless, those who see merit in segregated educational provision continue to advance their position. However, to keen analysts of what is occurring around education and those with special needs, the special education position has changed fundamentally over the recent past due to the success of the inclusive movement. Documentation of this change may be found in the latest edition of a text on issues in special education by Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow (2000), leading names in the field. Twenty years ago the term inclusion was almost absent from such a text. Twenty years ago the integration model was presented as a major development within the special education cascade system. Today the move to replace the cascade model with the inclusive model is a central focus of discussion.

Is the move to inclusive education slowing? The answer depends on how you look at the situation. In North America there has been a rapid switch to inclusive practice and inclusive policy in many jurisdictions. In the province of Ontario, Canada there was one inclusive school system in 1980. Today there are approximately ten. This is phenomenal change in education, a system more known for its conservatism than for its willingness to try new ideas. It may be that the first wave of change has crested and that a North American pause is occurring. An optimist might suggest that the pause characteristic of a cresting wave is simply a prelude to the unleashing of the total power of the wave. When one looks further afield it is apparent that other waves of inclusion are taking shape across the globe. In India the premise of inclusive education is accepted by a growing number and implementation has begun (Chadha, 1999). In Bosnia a movement among parents and professionals is gathering strength (Kenworthy & Whittker, 1998). Even in Japan, which many consider a bulwark of the special education model, the idea of inclusive education is being discussed Hoshikawa, 1997). A final evidence of continued movement toward placement of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms of community schools may be seen in changes to government policy. Though as leery as usual of declaring a firm and outright position on any issue as controversial as inclusive education, governments are altering policy to support regular class placement. In the U. S. IDEA is an obvious example. In Canada the majority of provinces have advised their school systems that the regular classroom is the placement of first choice for students with disabilities.

A bastion of resistance to inclusion may be found in the teaching force. For a variety of reasons teachers and their leaders, though generally believing inclusion to be desirable, are concerned about implementation. First among these concerns (Bunch, Lupart, & Brown, 1997) is the belief that the ordinary teacher has not been prepared professionally for inclusion. In large part this concern is well founded. Teacher preparation institutions were caught by surprise as the concept of inclusive education blossomed. Such is the nature of the typical teacher preparation program that the great majority of programs continue to focus whatever preparation they offer regarding

students with disabilities within the special education model. Whereas a few programs emphasizing inclusion exist, they are too few in number to have broad effect. For instance, no Canadian university has developed an emphasis on teacher preparation and research around inclusive education. The result is that those teachers with a natural affinity for inclusion have moved without waiting for additional professional preparation. These teachers have proven that the inclusive approach is possible and practical, though they, too, would prefer professional preparation for the task. The balance of teachers continue to sit on the sidelines and to permit their concerns to rule their practice. However, change in teacher preparation is on the horizon. A number of universities offer some preparation for inclusive practice. There are even some small programs developing which will complement the few already in place.

External pressures and increased appreciation of the inclusive approach are at work in many universities. One example of increasing pressure may be found in a project of the Coalition for Inclusive Education in Ontario, Canada. The Coalition, an amalgam of parent, youth, and other advocacy groups, plans to hold discussions with the Deans of every Faculty of Education in the province. They will advocate offerings in inclusive education be made available to every teacher education student, and offer whatever support they have to those Faculties willing to move progressively. They will also train community activists around the province in how to work with the Faculties. This project is being undertaken in partnership with the Faculty of Education of York University, the first to be visited and the first to agree that every graduate will receive instruction in inclusive education. The Coalition may have launched its project just at the time that some Faculties of Education have accepted that the movement to inclusive education is not a short term aberration in educational provision for students with disabilities.

Is the move to inclusion slowing? Any major societal realignment of attitude and action moves in fits and starts. Progress slows in one location as it speeds up in another. This is as true for inclusive education as it has been for equity for those who differ by gender or race. There is abundant evidence that longer term change is the order of the day and that the move toward inclusive education will live beyond temporary, localized differences in speed of change.

ISSUE ANALYSIS

Implications for Children

Until approximately 1980 the special education model represented society's best attempt to respond to the educational needs of children with disabilities. Educators believed that the needs of the children involved were such that they could not learn in mainstream classrooms, but that segregated education benefited their learning. Experience and evidence from research now increasingly indicate that the special education model is not as effective as including children with disabilities in mainstream classes in the company of age-appropriate peers.

Among the positive meanings for children with disabilities educated in inclusive mainstream classes, in comparison to education under the special education model, are:

- Heightened opportunity for full acceptance as citizens.
- Development of stronger self concept.

- Closer familiarity with mainstream curricula.
- Higher levels of academic achievement.
- Higher levels of social achievement.
- Heightened recognition of abilities by peers, teachers, and others in the community.
- Increased opportunity for independent living and gainful employment as adults.
- Increased possibility of higher levels of education.

There is a second group of children to be considered, those already in the mainstream and without disabilities. One reason often offered for not moving toward the inclusive model is that the presence of students with disabilities in mainstream classes will disrupt education of the non-disabled students (Bunch, Lupart, & Brown, 1977). This appears to be an unfounded concern. Staub and Peck (December 1994/January 1995) suggest that emergent research indicates that the academic progress of other children is not impeded, that teacher time is not disproportionately given to students with disabilities, and that non-disabled children do not pick up undesirable behaviours from knowing peers with disabilities. Rather, other students acquire reduced fear of human differences, grow in social cognition, improve in self-concept, develop personal principles, and develop warm and caring friendships with peers with disabilities. In a 1999 review of studies on the impact of inclusion Salend and Duhaney found:

The studies reviewed reveal that placement in an inclusion classroom does not interfere with the academic performance of students without disabilities with respect to the amount of allocated and engaged instructional time, the rate of interruptions to planned activities, and the students' achievement test scores and report card grades. The results of these studies also indicate that students without disabilities possess positive views of inclusion and believe that inclusion benefits them in terms of an increased acceptance, understanding, and tolerance of individual differences; a greater awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others; greater opportunities to have friendships with students with disabilities; and an improved ability to deal with disability in their own lives (p. 120).

Implications for Families

Parenting a child with disability challenges parents in ways that parenting other children does not. The degree of this challenge is increased by public labelling of their children through educational placement within special education settings. In comparison educational placement within mainstream classes relieves strain on the family in a number of ways.

- Knowledge that the family has done its utmost to include all its members in the community.
- Lessened concern about future independence and employment of their children with disabilities.
- Increased parental involvement in the education of their children with disabilities as members of the educational decision-making team..

More specifically, McGregor's and Volgelsberg's 1998 review of U. S. studies documenting outcomes for parents associated with inclusive settings records frequent

evidence that families met and befriended a network of parent friends through inclusive experience, that family experiences with inclusion were positive, and that families valued the friendship opportunities their children had through inclusive experience.

Implications for Educational Institutions

In one way or another schools play a central role in the lives of children with disabilities for a longer period than does any other institution of society. From preschool through elementary school, secondary school, community college, and university, educators provide service and support to the children of the nation. Though some degree of shift toward an inclusive model of education is apparent in certain countries, the majority of educators continue to support the special education model. The implication of remaining with this model have been outlined. The implications for educational institutions of moving to an inclusive model include the following.

- Reduction of expense associated with maintaining both mainstream and special education systems of education.
- Reallocation of resources from special education to mainstream settings.
- Shift from a medical/psychoeducational view of children with disabilities to a functional, community-oriented view.
- Shift from special teacher responsibility for the education of children with disabilities to a collaborative team view; the regular class teacher, specialist resource teacher, parents, the student involved, and others as appropriate.
- Preparation of all teachers for management of an inclusively oriented classroom.
- Preparation of all administrators for management of an inclusively oriented system.
- Resolution of disagreements between system and parent without recourse to the courts.

Implications for Public Policy

Government ministries and agencies with responsibility for education as broadly defined presently support the special education model. Shift to an inclusive model would necessitate a number of policy initiatives.

- Relevant educational funding, teacher preparation, and accessibility legislation would need to be prepared and enacted.
- A funding model appropriate to the inclusive education approach would need to be developed and implemented.
- A program designed to educate the public with regard to an inclusive approach to education would need to be prepared and delivered.

Implications for Human Rights

At present it is not clear that it is a right of a child with disability to choose education within the mainstream system. Legal decisions have been varied. The rights of a child in this regard requires clarification.

- Legislation guaranteeing right to education in the mainstream would need to be prepared and enacted.
- Advocates for the right of choice of educational placement must take up the

challenge and bring pressure to bear on governments to ensure this right.

EMERGING MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES

As noted, there is a world-wide shift toward the inclusive education model. Though governments and most school systems prefer the special education model featuring an integration option, a number of community, public policy, and international initiatives have highlighted emerging interest and action in the direction of the inclusive model.

Community

Activity at the community level takes place in terms of individual schools and, occasionally, school systems. In Canada and the US sufficient flexibility at the individual school level exists in some jurisdictions for the administration and staff of a single school to implement an inclusive approach.

- A model in point is the Building Inclusive Schools project in Ontario. With funding from the provincial government and the Canadian Association for Community Living, a procedure was established for elementary and secondary schools to join a project designed to move them to inclusive practice. Schools were assisted in this direction by Building Inclusive Schools project staff, supplemented by local parents and members of the disability community.
- A second innovative approach, common in both Canada and the US, and with parallels in other countries such as England, takes place at the school system level. The Hamilton-Wentworth District Catholic School Board has just celebrated its 30th year of inclusive practice. Some time ago senior officials of the Board decided that the mainstream classroom was the best site for education of all children. Acting on this decision, the Board dismantled its special education structures over time and moved all students with disabilities, regardless of type or degree of challenge, to mainstream classrooms of community schools. Today, almost without exception all students attend their local school. Board-wide and school based support systems are in place.
- At the University of Nottingham in England educational psychologists are leading the move to inclusive education. The preparation program for educational psychologists includes a strong component on authentic assessment and working with teachers as an alternative to the tradition special education psychoeducational, standardized test, intelligence test model. They are cooperating with educators in slowing moving the Local Education Authority to an inclusive stance.

Public Policy

Support for inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms of community schools has begun to appear at provincial/state, national, and international levels. There is no doubt but that government decision makers are hearing the voices of parents, of persons with disabilities, and of their advocates as they press demands for inclusion in all aspects of society, and particularly in the educational systems of the world. The equity argument, the community argument, and the human rights argument have been persuasive. If not, governments would not have moved. Examples of action are easily available.

- In the United States 1997 amendments made to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 have retained the provisions of 1975's Education of all Handicapped Children Act which required each state to establish "procedures to insure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public and private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped and that special classes, separate schooling, or the removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicaps is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily " (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000, p. 20).
- An American example of the degree to which a number of educational jurisdictions have complied with IDEA may be found in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The county set up a five year project to implement fully inclusive classrooms at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels. In Phase I of the project students with severe disabilities were integrated into non-academic classes while their peers with mild disabilities were given the opportunity to receive special education support in regular classes. Phase II saw all students fully included into regular classes. (Walsh, 1997).
- At the international level the Salamanca Statement represents strong commitment to inclusive education. The Statement resulted from UNESCO's 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality held in Salamanca, Spain. It affirms that "every child has a basic right to education" and that "those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools" as "regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming and inclusive communities and achieve education for all." The Statement called on all governments to give development of inclusive education the highest priority.
- A 1999 report of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, *Sustaining Inclusive Education: Including Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, studying inclusive education in eight countries found the inclusive approach to be preferred and workable

In Italy, for example, 99.9 per cent of school age children are educated in ordinary schools. Beginning in 1977 with a law abolishing "special classes established for children of statutory school age with disabilities" (p. 157), Italian legislators and courts repeatedly reinforced inclusion as the national model for students with special needs. Government policy has been consistent, class size has been protected, support teachers work with regular classroom teachers in every school, and teacher preparation is in place.

Findings such as this across the eight countries studied led the authors of the OECD report to note, "Although fully inclusive education systems are difficult to locate, enough examples exist, at least at the local and school level, to begin to identify the main factors for sustaining inclusive education." The report concludes that "given certain safeguards, there are few, if any, organizational, curriculum or pedagogical reasons to maintain segregated provision within the public sector. In fact, encouraging a

symbiosis between regular and special education personnel will prove beneficial for the school and all its students" (p. 2).

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

What would be the key challenges and opportunities in moving educational systems to an inclusive position for students with disabilities. Example initiatives have been sprinkled throughout previous discussion. They are smaller and larger examples of what might be done within one educational system or within one country. The greater task is to look across educational systems and countries and sketch what might be done nationally and internationally. The following thoughts occur.

World movement toward inclusive model - There is a discernible movement toward inclusive education across the world. Within this reality there is both challenge and opportunity. The challenge is to sustain movement, to persuade legislators that they should act in the interest of all children by bringing them together in education, to work to have educators realize the values of inclusion, and to advocate for inclusion where it is not presently being advocated. The opportunity is to alter the face of educational structure as we know it, to make disability a simple difference within education systems and not a stigma, and to alter societal perception of disability. Strong leadership has been shown by UNESCO and OECD in this regard.

Opportunities in some countries to leapfrog the special education model and to move directly to the inclusive model - A number of nations, many of them termed third world or developing, are in the process of extending access to education as a basic right and a provision of their society. As far as this extension has progressed, characteristically, it includes only children without handicaps. What provision has been made for children with handicaps tends to be within special schools and classes, and even these are not common. There is an opportunity in such situations to begin to include children with disabilities in the basic, regular education system as it extends to all. As special education provision is not extensive, it can be dismantled as all children become part of the regular education system. At the same time, future teachers may receive instruction on strategies for inclusion and future special educators may be prepared to support the regular class teachers.

Moving nations with sophisticated special education structures to inclusion -This presents a greater challenge than does working with countries without sophisticated educational structures to move to inclusion. In nations such as England and Japan considerable investment has been made in the bricks and mortar of buildings, in preparation of special education teachers, in transporting students to special classes and schools, and in setting up an administrative hierarchy of specialists. It may appear a simple thing to simply reduce the size of the special education structure over time as more and more students with disabilities begin to attend the regular classrooms of their community schools. However, the system is accustomed to the special education approach. Professionals have made their careers within special education; they have dedicated their efforts to building and supporting the special education system; they believe their actions have been right and many are not prepared to agree that another model has more positive effect and can replace what they have built.

Educators have grown up with special education, are habituated to it, and do not

see change as positive. The challenge is in changing the mind set, a much more difficult task than finding a new use for buildings previously dedicated to special education. A beginning, however, can be made by a) emphasizing recent research findings in favour of inclusion, b) by emphasizing that the inclusive approach is as effective or more effective than the special education approach, and c) by re-orienting teacher preparation.

- **Undertaking research into inclusive education in order to understand clearly its value, supportive instructional strategies, classroom management strategies, administrative supports, and many other aspects.**

The inclusive approach is of such recent appearance that researchers have not yet had time to research it with any vigour or to any extent. Though the research available is sufficiently positive to persuade many that the inclusive approach is to be preferred to alternatives, many hesitate to move until more research of a convincing nature is available. At the same time, most researchers into disability and education have built their reputations researching the special education model, its effects, and its needs. There is considerable opportunity here to establish new lines of research.

In acceptance of this challenge an initiative is underway in Canada at the present time. The federal government has been approached with the recommendation that it establish a collaborating network of research centres focused on inclusive education through insertion of endowment funds. The intent would be to work with educators, advocates, and persons with disabilities to establish a research agenda, to prepare young researchers to work within the field, and to motivate Faculties of Education to prepare future teachers for inclusive practice. In one stroke the Canadian government could address a number of the major challenges retarding implementation of an inclusive education approach across the country.

Final Word

Support for the development of inclusive education around the globe is apparent. Governments, international associations, state/provincial departments of education, and local education authorities are moving substantively in this direction. However, the challenges are significant. Many educators resist movement toward inclusion. They are content with their existing special education services. Many believe themselves not prepared to teach students with disabilities in regular classes. Elements of society do not agree that those with disabilities have the right to the same access to education as their non-handicapped peers. The priority in some developing countries is to spend resources extending basic education to non-disabled students not yet in school. Others are emulating the special education structures characteristic of more industrialized nations. Some nations are immersed in the tragedy of war.

There are many concems. Nevertheless, the world is on the move with regard to those among us with disabilities. It may take time. It may take effort. It may cause controversy and it may deliberately be derailed at times. But the time has come for people with disabilities to take their rightful place within the mainstream of education as do all others. This revolution is not to be denied.

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