Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: Piecing the Puzzle Together

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Reflecting the recent, extensive changes in special and general education, this new edition examines a range of timely topics as it explains the evolution of inclusive education over the past five years. You'll learn about curriculum, instruction, and assessment in inclusive classrooms strategies for collaborative teaming and co-teaching ways to empower and motivate students a framework for understanding and facilitating systems change Chapter-length case studies show you how a variety of districts have made inclusion work. Special "reflection" chapters provide firsthand accounts of how inclusive education affects different members of the learning community. Throughout, the editors' perceptive writing clarifies the integral roles of students, faculty, and families in creating and maintaining inclusive schools and classrooms.

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Editorial Review

Review
"This book should be read by all who are interested in forwarding the incl"usive schooling debate to a further level. . . . It will help all to appreciate better what schools ought to be about.

About the Author

Richard A. Villa, Ed.D., has worked with thousands of teachers and administrators throughout North America and the rest of the world in developing and implementing instructional support systems for educating all students within general education environments. Dr. Villa has been a classroom teacher, special education coordinator, pupil personnel services director, and director of instructional services. He has authored more than 70 articles and book chapters regarding inclusive education and has co-edited three previous books for teachers, administrators, and parents: *Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: An Administrative Guide to Creating Heterogeneous Schools* (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1992), *Creativity and Collaborative Learning: A Practical Guide to Empowering Students and Teachers* (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1994), and *Creating an Inclusive School Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,* (1995). He has presented at numerous national and international conferences and is known for his enthusiastic, humorous style of presenting.

Jacqueline S. Thousand has been a teacher educator since 1981 and has more than 20 years of experience in training teachers and providing technical assistance to schools to create inclusive educational experiences for children from preschool through high school. At the University of Vermont, she coordinated an early childhood special education teacher preparation program and one of the first Inclusion Facilitator graduate programs (1986-1996) in the United States. As the coordinator of the Vermont Homecoming Project in the early 1980s, she was a pioneer in developing instruction and curriculum modification strategies for including students with moderate and severe disabilities that came to be the staples of inclusive practice in the 1990s. With her move in 1996 to California State University San Marcos, she coordinates a teacher credential program that endorses graduates as general and special educators, thus enabling them to advocate for and support students with disabilities as either classroom teachers or special educators. In addition to directing the college's special education credential and master's programs, she continues her commitment to community development by working with leadership and staff of local schools to restructure special day class programs and move the teachers and students in these classes into the mainstream. She also works closely with families to make inclusive education communities a reality. She sits on the editorial boards of a number of professional journals and is past co-editor of Teacher Education and Special Education. She currently serves on the International Board of TASH (formerly The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps), an international advocacy association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates, and people who work in the disabilities field. Dr. Thousand has authored numerous books, research articles, and book chapters on practical how-to strategies for meeting the needs of all students in general education; adapting curriculum, instruction, and assessment; collaborative teaming; and creative problem solving.

Excerpted from chapter 1 of **Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: Piecing the Puzzle Together,** *Second Edition,* edited by Richard A. Villa, Ed.D., & Jacqueline S. Thousand, Ph.D.

Setting the Context: History of and Rationales for Inclusive Schooling

In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers, policy makers, parents, consumers, and educators discussed changing the predominant pull-out and separate classroom delivery of special education services, using terms such as mainstreaming, integration, regular education initiative (REI), unified systems, heterogeneous schooling, and inclusion. These discussions highlighted some of the perceived requirements for new types of service delivery to be successful, including restructuring, merging general and special education, creating a unified education system, and developing shared responsibility for students (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1987; Will, 1985). This chapter offers a context for inclusive education through a historical perspective and a presentation of multiple rationales that motivate an increasing number of educators, parents, people with disabilities, and policy makers to advocate for the creation of inclusive schooling.

HISTORICAL TREND TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

It is generally acknowledged (Lerner, 1987; Stainback, Stainback, & Bunch, 1989) that the discussion of including students with disabilities in general education was prompted in 1985 by then Assistant Secretary of Education Madeleine Will's Wingspread REI speech and by two subsequent 1986 publications (Will, 1986a, 1986b), even though similar ideas had been published previously (e.g., Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Other authors and their publications became associated with the REI because of similarities in expressed concerns regarding segregated delivery of special education services and proposals for the restructuring or the merger of general and special education (e.g., Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lilly, 1986; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang et al., 1987).

Will identified four major negative consequences of the organization and delivery of prevailing separate education services to children with special needs:

1. Eligibility requirements and procedures resulted in many children being denied access to appropriate supports to succeed in the general classroom.

2. Performance expectations of students in separate programs often were lowered on the part of the students themselves, their teachers, and the students' peers.

3. The model of identifying and serving students with learning difficulties tended to be reactive, addressing problems after they occurred, rather than proactive, attempting to prevent learning difficulties from occurring.

4. "[A] cooperative, supportive partnership" (Will, 1986a, p. 412) among parents, school officials, and teachers did not exist.

Will identified large numbers of children failing to learn in general education, estimating that 20%–30% of school-age children had difficulty learning in school. Given these numbers, Will called for change and advocated for building-level reform. Specifically, "building level administrators must be empowered to assemble appropriate professional and other resources for delivering effective, coordinated, comprehensive services for all students based on educational need rather than eligibility for special programs" (1986a, p. 413).

Will also called for early identification and intervention, curriculum- based assessment, ongoing assessment of student progress and program effectiveness, and stronger parent–professional partnerships. She urged that schools employ principals who could be instructional leaders and general and special educators who could work together as members of an instructional team. Will acknowledged that the success of any reform effort was dependent on the establishment of a climate of trust among educators, parents, and policy makers.

From the start, responses to Will's REI proposal were mixed and emotional. Several authors expressed enthusiastic support and expansion of the REI concepts (Lilly, 1986; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1985; Wang et al., 1987) and described what the so-called merged education system might be. At a minimum, REI proponents called for the elimination of segregated labels, classrooms, and pull-out programs and services. They expressed optimism about changing what was in the mainstream — general education — by rethinking traditional instructional and curricular approaches. Although the Will proposals referred primarily to children with mild or high-incidence disabilities (i.e., children classified as experiencing mild learning disabilities, mental retardation, and behavior disorders), mention was made of educating a broader range of students full-time in general education.

Others were pessimistic; negative; fearful; and, in some cases, angry (e.g., Duncan, 1987; Lerner, 1987; Lieberman, 1985; McCarthy, 1987; Messinger, 1985). An entire issue (January 1988) of the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* (Wiederholt, 1988) was devoted to issues surrounding the REI. Although the issue was not completely negative, in general the articles in that issue expressed extreme caution and lack of enthusiasm, at least with regard to children with learning disabilities. The journal's editors called for a critical appraisal of assumptions underlying the REI and research in support of the possibility of instructing students with exceptional needs in general education before "wholesale endorsement" (p. 4) occurred.

Expanding the Discussion

Within a short time, the REI debate was broadened to include students with moderate and severe disabilities. Stainback and Stainback were among the first authors to propose the complete merger of general and special education into "one unified system structured to meet the unique needs of all students" (1984, p. 102). Advocacy efforts expanded the REI to enroll all students, including those labeled as having severe and profound disabilities, in the general education classrooms of their local neighborhood schools (Biklen, 1985; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Knoblock, 1982). Experimentation began with the actual inclusion and education of students with intense challenges in general classrooms on part-time and full-time bases (Biklen, 1988; Strully & Strully, 1985; Thousand et al., 1986; Villa & Thousand, 1988). Although there appeared to be an emerging recognition of the benefits of local community school placement for students with severe disabilities (Brown et al., 1989; Sailor, 1989), the appropriateness of educating these students in general classrooms was hotly debated. Brown et al. noted that "the major placement issue of the day is whether students with severe intellectual disabilities should be based in regular or special classrooms in home schools" (1989, p. 12). Jenkins, Pious, and Jewell (1990) argued that, even though the REI should apply to most students with disabilities, students with severe disabilities should not be included because their

curriculum needs extended beyond those materials classroom teachers were responsible for adapting and delivering to individual learners. Burrello and Tourgee identified students with severe disabilities as the subgroup of students with disabilities for whom "maintaining a self-contained setting in a centrally located place in the building with socialization opportunities was the most realistic program" (1990, p. 33).

Williams, Villa, Thousand, and Fox (1993), however, viewed the discussion of separate class placement for students with severe disabilities as inappropriate for two reasons. First, placement of students with severe disabilities in general classrooms had been occurring for several years in a number of North American schools, and there were documented benefits for students with and without disabilities and their teachers (Nevin, Thousand, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Villa, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Thousand et al., 1986). Second, federal law (i.e., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 [IDEA; PL 101-476]) required placement of students with disabilities to be based on each student's identified needs, not on the categorical label (e.g., severe disabilities) assigned to the student. Raising the question of whether general class placement was appropriate for a category of learners (e.g., students identified as having severe and profound disabilities) "assumes that placement can be made based upon handicapping condition without documentation of an individual student's needs and examination of whether the needs could be met in a regular class based placement" (Williams et al., 1993, p. 333). The central issue was one of appropriate curriculum adaptation to address individual students' needs within general education classroom environments, not whether a category of students should have access to general classes.

Inclusion as Part and Parcel of Educational Reform

In the early 1990s, the REI debate once again expanded. Skrtic described the REI as representing "a number of proposals for achieving the spirit of the EHA [Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142)] for students with disabilities by extending its rights and resources to all students" (1991, p. 149). Thousand and Villa (1991) echoed Skrtic in their suggestion that the focus of the REI debate should be on the future — how to structure education to meet the future needs of all children. Growing public and professional dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy and outcomes of special education (e.g., Wagner, 1989) and recognition of the need for school restructuring for all learners was evidenced in 1992, with an Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) resolution and a report of the National Association of State Boards of Education's (NASBE, 1992) Study Group on Special Education.

The ASCD resolution acknowledged the paradox that federal and state funding of remedial and special education programs is based on assessment and labeling of children, despite increasing empirical evidence that "labeling stigmatizes children and tends to result in segregated services and lower teacher expectations" (ASCD, 1992, p. 2). Thus, one of the organization's six 1992 resolutions was for the full inclusion of special programs through instructional environments that eliminated tracking and segregation, services that focused on the prevention of learning problems rather than on after-the-fact labeling, minimal restrictive regulations, and flexible use of funding to promote success for all children.

The NASBE Study Group on Special Education, after 2 years of study of special education and the general education school reform movement, concluded in its Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools report that the following five questions must be answered with a resounding "no":

1. Are children currently classified as "special education students" achieving what they are capable of?

2. Are they being prepared for life after school?

3. Are current mainstreaming practices achieving their intended outcomes?

4. Is the separate special education system we have created the best way to educate these students?

5. Has special education been asked to join general education in the reform movement that is now beginning to focus on standards, outcomes, and educating an increasingly diverse student body with individualized instruction? (1992, p. 4)

The NASBE Study Group recommended a major shift in how education services are provided and charged state boards of education to establish goals and policies that supported collaboration between general and special education. The group urged the creation of a unified education system, with major changes in organizational and instructional practices, preservice and in-service personnel preparation, licensure, and funding. The group encouraged teachers to focus on effective instruction rather than on the assessment and labeling of students while ensuring due process, parental involvement, and individualization of services.

Entering the 1990s, the number of schools attempting to actualize the ASCD and NASBE vision of inclusive education grew rapidly. By 1993, almost every state was implementing inclusion at some level (Webb, 1994). The percentage of students with disabilities ages 6–21 served in general education classrooms increased from 32.8% in 1990–1991 to 46% in 1995–1996. Literature also emerged that described some of these inclusive schools (e.g., Villa, Thousand, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1990; Villa et al., 1992) and the methods that they employed to adapt curriculum and instruction and alter the traditional schooling paradigm (e.g., Falvey, 1995; Neary, Halvorsen, Kronberg, & Kelly, 1992; Stainback & Stainback, 1990, 1992; Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989; Thousand, Villa, &anp; Nevin, 1994; Villa & Thousand, 1995).

Current Situation

Tremendous attention at the federal, state, and local levels remains focused on educational reform.1 Policy makers are emphasizing the establishment of national and state standards; greater flexibility in the use of funds to support categorical programs; and new, more authentic forms of assessment. Among the most notable comprehensive school reform programs and models that have been developed and disseminated across the United States are the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1984), Accelerated Schools (Levin, 1987), Success for All (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1993), and the School Development Program (Comer, 1988). Each of these models involves a large network of schools, all of which are attempting to effect comprehensive reform in school organization and instruction. All of these restructuring efforts embrace the values of inclusive education (e.g., valuing of diversity, collaboration, unified services, problem solving, and expanded options in the classroom to support student learning).

The Accelerated Schools program is based on three underlying principles: purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on the strengths of the entire school community. Accelerated Schools lessons are designed to enrich learning through higher expectations, relevant content, and stimulating instruction (Keller, 1995). The Coalition of Essential Schools comprises secondary schools that emphasize collaborative problem solving and decision making among administration members, teachers, students, and families to create significant long-term reform (O'Neil, 1995). The Success for All program emphasizes the prevention of learning problems and addressing learning challenges through intensive interventions designed to minimally disrupt students' participation and progress in the general education program (Slavin, 1997). Schools that adopt the Comer model establish teams of stakeholders to create a comprehensive plan for the school. The model is based on the belief that the relationship between the school and individual families is at the heart of an impoverished child's success or the lack thereof and includes a comprehensive staff development program (Ramirez-Smith, 1995).

In 1995, the National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion canvassed these and other major nongovernmental reform efforts (e.g., Foxfire, Paideia, National Center for Effective Schools) to determine

the extent to which children with disabilities were included in their reform efforts. The results of this canvassing noted increased attention to the inclusion of children with disabilities in these reform efforts but a less-than-coherent plan for supporting students with disabilities in general education environments. Lipsky and Gartner concluded that,

For the most part, inclusive education activities are initiated at the local school district level rather than through state-level or federal restructuring efforts. In too many school districts, inclusive education remains an isolated activity. Increasingly, however, the placing of special education students into general education classrooms with the necessary supports and aids (i.e., inclusive education) precipitates broader school reform or school restructuring efforts that include both special and general education students. Basically, they become the cause and consequence of each other. (1997, p. 231)

Until the 1990s, the inclusive education movement was viewed as a separate initiative running parallel or even counter to concomitant general education reform efforts (Block & Haring, 1992). In contrast, as Udvari-Solner and Thousand (1995) illustrated, established and emerging general education theories actually emulate the principles and practices underpinning inclusive education. General education school reform initiatives that Udvari-Solner and Thousand identified as offering great promise for facilitating inclusive education included multicultural education; outcome-based education; multiple intelligences theory; interdisciplinary curriculum; constructivist learning; authentic assessment of student learning; multiage groupings; use of technology in the classroom; forms of peer-mediated instruction such as cooperative group learning, teaching responsibility, and peacemaking; and collaborative teaming among adults and students.

In the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 (PL 103-227), the Clinton administration's education reform legislation, there also was explicit language emphasizing that education goals apply to all students, including those who traditionally have been excluded from educational reforms (e.g., students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, students from minority cultures).

The Clinton administration's Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Judith E. Heumann, in an announcement releasing the Department of Education's Fifteenth Annual Report to Congress, stated,

Historically, we have had two education systems, one for students with disabilities and one for everyone else. We are working to create one education system that values all students. The regular classroom in the neighborhood school should be the first option for students with disabilities. Administrators and teachers must receive the training and the help they need to make that the best option as well. (U.S. Department of Education, 1997)

With the passage of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 (PL 105-17), the Senate and House Committees reaffirmed the presumption that students with disabilities are to be educated in general education classrooms. In its findings, Congress emphasized the need for high expectations for all students with disabilities, ensuring access to the general education curriculum and coordination of IDEA implementation with other school improvement efforts so that special education can become a service rather than a place where students with disabilities go. The implementation of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 requires significant efforts to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the involvement of general education teachers with individualized education program (IEP) development and implementation for students with disabilities.

At the turn of the 21st century, the inclusion debate clearly has expanded beyond special education and become part of the total school reform movement. The National Education Association, in The Integration of Students with Special Needs into Regular Classrooms: Policies and Practices that Work, noted,

There is a growing body of . . . evidence that integration can help provide all students with curricular and life

skills that expand their opportunities for future success. The current state of knowledge about successful practice makes this an opportune time to reflect on how schools can achieve high quality outcomes in integrated settings for all students. (1997, pp. 4–5)

The National Education Association joined nine other national education associations (the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council for Exceptional Children, the Council of Great City Schools, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and the National State Boards Association) in acknowledging the characteristics that enable schools to implement inclusive educational practices fully and successfully:

• Diversity is valued and celebrated.

• The principal plays an active and supportive leadership role.

• All students work toward the same educational outcomes based on high standards.

• There is a sense of community in which everyone belongs, is accepted, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community.

• There is an array of services.

• Flexible groupings, authentic and meaningful learning experiences, and developmentally appropriate curricula are accessible to all students.

• Research-based instructional strategies are used.

• Natural support networks are fostered across students and staff.

• Staff have changed roles to be more collaborative.

• There are new forms of accountability.

• There is access to necessary technology and physical modifications and accommodations.

• Parents are embraced as equal partners. (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995)

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