

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Access to General Curriculum

Sailor, W., & Rogers, B. (March, 2005). Rethinking inclusion: School wide applications. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 503-507.

BOTTOM LINE

“Inclusion” is usually regarded as the placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. In this article, however, Wayne Sailor and Blair Roger widen the concept of integrated education, in which previously specialized adaptations and strategies can be used with all students to enhance their learning.

Beach Center on Disability

Making a Sustainable Difference in Quality of Life



KEY FINDINGS

- The recasting of special education into many separate disability categories and interventions may be weakening the fields of special education and education as a whole.
- In our efforts to better meet the education needs of specific identifiable groups, we have promoted differentiated at the expense of integration.
- In the early days, special education embraced the diagnostic/prescriptive models of modern medicine and disability was viewed as pathology.
- Then in the 1980's, the U.S. Department of Education began to advance policy reforms designed to slow the growth of special education categorization and practice. These initiatives occurred against a backdrop of publications citing positive outcomes from integrated practice and a corresponding barrage of studies associated with separate classrooms and pullout practices with negative outcomes.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, for all its problems, does offer special education an opportunity to pursue once again the pathway to integration.
- The Regular Education Initiative was designed to encourage special education supports and services in the general education classroom. Framing the reform of special education policy as general education policy failed within the community of special education.
- More recently, federal policy advanced “inclusion” as recommended practice. This initiative too failed to significantly change special education placement and service configurations.
- The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, for all its problems, does offer special education an opportunity to pursue once again the pathway to integration. First, all children in education are considered general education students according to the law. Second, the law makes accountable intervention and teaching methods for all students in general education classrooms, including special education students with specialized supports and services.
- Many students with disabilities in the general classroom cannot keep up with their peers, causing the whole classroom to slow its pace. “Inclusion” in the general

classroom therefore usually results in special education students sitting in the back of the class with a paraprofessional working on something else.

- There is evidence that many special education practices benefit all students. Why not instead have services and supports that therefore benefit the learning for all students?
- We have developed 6 principles of services and supports that can be developed school-wide for all students called the School Wide Applications Model (SAM).
- One of SAM's principles is that "general education guides all student learning" including the following features: (1) all students attend their regularly assigned school; (2) all students are considered general education students; (3) general education teachers are responsible for all students; (4) all students are instructed in accordance with the general curriculum.
- Another SAM principle is that "all school resources are configured to benefit all students" including the following features: 1) all students are included in all activities; 2) all resources benefit all students; 3) the school effectively incorporates general education students in the instructional process.
- Still another SAM principle is that "schools develop social development and citizenship forthrightly" by incorporating positive behavior support (PBS) at the individual, group and school-wide levels.
- Another SAM principle is that "schools are democratically organized, data-driven, problem solving systems" which includes the following features: (1) the school is data-driven and uses team processes; (2) all personnel take part in the teaching/learning process, (3) the school makes employ a non-categorical lexicon; and (4) the school is governed by a site leadership team.
- The fifth SAM principle is "schools have open boundaries in relation to their families and communities". Two critical features support these guiding principles: (1) schools have working partnerships with their students' families; and (2) schools have working partnerships with local businesses and service providers.
- The sixth SAM principle is "schools enjoy district support for undertaking an extensive systems-change effort" which requires district support at all levels.
- Each Sam school employs a package of psychometrically established instruments with which to assess the progress related to priorities that were established through the school-centered planning process. These instruments include a school wide evaluation to assess support for positive behavior, SAMAN to assess the fifteen critical features of SAM, and EVOLVE to assess the training of paraprofessionals and the ways they are deployed.

- The SAM model requires certain structural elements in place at the school level including a site leadership team and school-centered planning.
- The SAM model also requires a district leadership team and a district resource team at the district level.
- Site leadership teams (SLT) meet at least biweekly and undergo full-day “retreats” at least twice a year, prior to the beginning of each new term. The school-centered planning process takes place during these retreats.
- School centered planning process uses a facilitator to assist the SLT to assist with their SAM vision, goals and objectives for that vision and measurement strategies.
- District leadership teams (DLT) usually meets three to four times a year to review SAM school site plans and to consider requests for approval of policy and budget items that arise from those plans.
- District resource teams’ (DRT) functions are to assist the DLT team in requests for resources from each school site for the coming term.

METHODS

- This model and insights into this model was developed through the authors’ own research and experiences as educators.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Giangreco, M.F. & Doyle, M.B. (2002). Students with disabilities and paraprofessional supports: Benefits, balance and band-aids. *Exceptional Children*, 68, 1-12.

Kaufmann, J.M., McGee, K., & Brigham, M. (April, 2004). Enabling or disabling? Observations on changes in special education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 613-620.

Lieberman, L.M. (1985). Special education and regular education: A merger made in heaven? *Exceptional Children*, 51, 1-12.

Matson, J.L. (1994). *Autism in children and adults: Etiology, assessment, and intervention*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brookes/Cole.

Sailor, W. & Gee, K. (1988). Progress in educating students with the most severe disabilities: Is there any? *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13, 87-99.

- Sailor, W. & Guess, D. (1983). *Severely handicapped students: An instructional design*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Skrtic, T.M. (1991). *Behind special education: A critical analysis of professional culture and school organization*. Denver: Love Publishing.
- Taylor, S.J. (1988). Caught in the continuum: A critical analysis of the principles of least restrictive environment. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13, 41-53.

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