Inclusion of Students with E/BD

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The History of Inclusion

Over the past four decades, many parents, educators, legislators, and public administrators have proposed that students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) should live and learn under conditions similar to those made available for their normal peers. In 1950, the Children's Charter issued by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection proclaimed that "every child who is in conflict with society had the right to be dealt with intelligently as society's charge, not society's outcast; with the home, the school, the church, the court, and the institution, when needed, shaped to return him whenever possible to the normal stream of life" (Deno, 1978, p. 5). In his 1956 presidential address to the Council for Exceptional Children, Francis Lord expressed the concepts of inclusion when he urged that educational systems be structured to provide normalizing learning experiences to every handicapped child to the maximum extent possible (Deno, 1978). There were very few public school programs for students with E/BD at that time, so his comments were directed primarily toward programs for children with sensory impairments, physical disabilities, and mental retardation.

Some school districts have offered inclusive programs for students with certain disabilities for many years. Children with visual impairments have been served in the regular schools of Minneapolis, Minnesota since the early 1900s (Deno, 1978). In Tacoma, Washington, educational programs for children with special needs have been offered since the early 1960s under a principle of "progressive inclusion," the basic concepts of which are that (a) every child will be educated under as near normal circumstances as possible, (b) educational opportunities are open to all children, and (c) parents are partners in the education of their children (Bertness, 1976).

"All Means All"

Inclusion is obviously not a new idea. What is new in this decade is that school systems across the continent are placing ever-increasing numbers of children with disabilities in the regular classroom, sometimes without the careful preparation of the student, his/her peers, the

faculty, and the environment. School administrators, legislators, and other public officials have been exhorted by very vocal advocacy groups to place <u>all</u> children with disabilities in the regular classroom. These groups use as their battle cries such statements as "All means all!" or "What part of <u>all</u> do you not understand?" They might well include, "Here we come, ready or not," because many regular school programs are not prepared to deal with students with disabilities–particularly those with E/BD.

E/BD: The Unwanted Population

Students with E/BD are still unwanted in the regular school program. General education teachers and nondisabled students regard these youngsters more negatively than students from any other disability category (Safran & Safran, 1984, 1985; Vidoni, Fleming, & Mintz, 1983). Those who start fights are the most rejected peer group of all (Parkhurst & Asher, 1992). Even those individuals who advocate "full" inclusion do not want their own children placed in the same classes with students with E/BD, particularly those who exhibit aggressive behaviors (Guetzloe, 1994c). In this case, "All means all <u>except </u>students with E/BD."

The Meaning of Inclusion

The interpretation of the term "inclusion" may vary considerably from district to district in any region of the country. In some districts, inclusion has been defined as the provision of an educational program for students with mild disabilities (mild learning disabilities or mild mental retardation) in the regular classroom with little or no assistance from a special educator. In other districts, students with severe disabilities are placed in the regular classroom for the entire school day, each student accompanied by a fulltime instructional aide. It is evident that (a) inclusion means different things to different educators, even those in neighboring school districts, and (b) there may be a "continuum" of inclusion, even in school districts that ostensibly embrace a philosophy of full inclusion of all students with disabilities.

Placement in the regular classroom (whether it consists of maintaining a student in the regular classroom who is exhibiting behavioral problems or reintegrating a student who has been served in a more restrictive setting) has always been a stated goal of special education for children with E/BD. Professionals in special education, however, clearly understand that the regular classroom is not an appropriate placement for all students, and that a full continuum of

educational options must be maintained, as required by federal law. There are many youngsters, and the number seems to be growing, whose behavior and affect are such that they cannot receive an education in the regular school. For these students (particularly those who exhibit violent behavior), more restrictive options are not only desirable but absolutely necessary. For some youngsters with E/BD, the least restrictive environment may be a special class, a special school, or a residential institution.

Inclusion Defined

For purposes of this discussion, inclusion will be operationally defined as a philosophical position, attitude, and value statement, rather than a point on the continuum of educational services. The philosophy of inclusion is an individual and collective commitment among education professionals, families, and the community toward "ownership" of all students with disabilities and those who are at risk of being so identified, as well as those without disabilities (Guetzloe, 1994a, 1994b). Those who advocate inclusion believe that all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their problems, belong in their home school–the school to which they would be assigned if they had not been identified as needing special services.

Elements of inclusion. Among the most important elements of inclusion are: (a) attending the home school--the same school that neighbors, siblings, or nondisabled peers attend; and (b) being placed in regular education classes with classmates of the same chronological age. At the same time, inclusion of students with disabilities means (a) having an individualized education program (IEP), as required by federal law; and (b) being provided with the support necessary (special education and related services) for success in that environment.

CCBD Forums on Inclusion

The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) sponsored several national forums for purposes of gathering information from the field regarding successful inclusion programs. CCBD has led the field of special education in (a) presenting the issues related to the inclusion of children and youth with E/BD and (b) asking practitioners for their input regarding what works, what doesn't, and what might be standing in the way (Bullock & Gable, 1994a, 1994b).

CCBD Position Statement on Inclusion

The CCBD Executive Committee (1994) has also promulgated a position statement on inclusion of students with E/BD. Among the important points included in the statement are the following:

- For some, but not all, students with emotional/behavioral disorders, successful integration into the regular classroom is a reasonable expectation.
- We should look at educational options for students with emotional/behavioral disorders separately from options for students with other disabilities.
- Alternative (more restrictive) arrangements are necessary for students whose behavior is so disruptive that the learning of nondisabled students is significantly impaired.
- Successful integration of the E/BD student depends upon special preparation of both the student and the setting and the availability of an array of support services for the student, the student's family, and the regular classroom teacher.
- A full continuum of educational services must be maintained.

The current task for special education professionals is not to continue to debate the appropriateness of inclusion, but rather to determine the conditions under which inclusion will be successful for students with E/BD. The following discussion will focus on strategies for planning and implementing appropriate inclusive school programs for these students.

Components of a Quality Program for Students with E/BD

One product of the National Needs Analysis Project at the University of Oregon is a resource handbook for administrators of programs for students with E/BD (Grosenick, George, & George, 1986). In this handbook, the components that must be considered in planning effective programs for students with E/BD are listed and discussed, including (a) the program philosophy, (b) student needs and identification procedures, (c) program goals and objectives, (d) instructional methods and curriculum, (e) community involvement, (f) program design and operation, (g) procedures for program exit, and (h) program evaluation. All of these components should be addressed, as they relate specifically to inclusion, long before the implementation of program changes. In one school district in which inclusion of students with E/BD has been successful, the planning began three years before the reintegration of students with E/BD

(Keenan, McLaughlin, & Denton, 1994).

Initial Planning for Inclusion

Fostering the sense of "ownership," vital to the success of an inclusive program, requires the commitment and collaboration of all individuals and agencies who will work with students with E/BD and their families. Probably the most important facet of planning for inclusion is the establishment of a number of committees and teams to assist in the process. Some of these groups may be assigned specific, short-term tasks, but some may have responsibilities over a long period of time.

Establishment of a District-wide Task Force

The first step in planning is to establish a district-wide task force or planning committee, which includes representatives of all institutions, organizations, agencies, and groups that may be affected by the inclusion of students with E/BD (e.g., parents of students with E/BD and those without), teachers, administrators, mental health professionals, community organizations, volunteer groups, law enforcement, and the business community). It is important to include members of diverse ethnic, linguistic or cultural populations represented in the community. Community involvement and support are essential to the success of an inclusive program.

Other Teams or Committees

Other teams or committees may already exist or may be selected as specific needs emerge. These may include: (a) interagency councils of service providers, (b) building teams (e. g., child study or case management committee, multidisciplinary assessment team, parent advisory committee, crisis intervention team), (c) content area or grade-level instructional teams, (d) co-teaching teams (each consisting of a regular education and a special education teacher), and (e) grant proposal committees.

All planning committees should include individuals who possess considerable knowledge about students with E/BD, the needs of their families, and the services that are available. It is necessary to involve effective teachers, administrators, and clinicians; concerned parents; people who are active in national and international organizations; and individuals who read and understand the literature and are therefore aware of current trends, issues, and best practices. If

such individuals are not available in the district, knowledgeable consultants should be brought in to help.

Communication Procedures

Early in the process, the various committees should decide on the communication procedures (formal and informal, verbal and written) that will be used between and among all the individuals and groups involved in the planning. These may include memoranda, letters, news releases, brochures, program policy statements, program handbooks, newsletters. Progress reports and other information can be made available at meetings of parent organizations, professional societies, interagency councils, building teams, faculty and staff, parents and teachers, and community organizations and agencies. It is essential to keep all participants in the school and community informed of progress and possible changes in the program.

Program Philosophy

The program's philosophy or mission statement should be promulgated early in the planning process. For example, the following statements have been suggested by Grosenick et al. (1986):

- We believe that all children can learn and benefit from an education.
- We declare that all children have the right to an education in the least restrictive environment.
- We believe that families should participate in the educative process.

Program Goals

Program goals should also be written and operationalized, including (a) the intended long-term goals of the total program, and (b) specific purposes and directions for individual students' programs. A goal statement for an inclusive program might be "to maintain E/BD students in the regular school program to the maximum extent possible."

Goals for the inclusive program in Westerly, Rhode Island, included the following:

- Gradually, over 3 years, incorporate change and success that would lead to more inclusive programs
- Provide teachers and school personnel with support and resources that would improve the

programs.

- Rebuild trust and communication with students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community.

Student Characteristics and Needs

Careful consideration must be given to the characteristics and needs of the individual students to be included in the program. A committee assigned to this task should (a) find all students with E/BD in the district, (b) visit and observe them in their current placements and their homes, and (c) study their permanent school records and individualized education programs (IEPs). This committee should also review teacher referrals over the last year to determine if other students (still in the regular class) are in the process of referral and identification. Students who may be eligible for a change in placement, whether or not the current IEP includes that recommendation, should be brought to the attention of the appropriate multidisciplinary assessment team. Federal law requires that all placements must be individually determined according to the student's needs and abilities. Placement of any student in a less or more restrictive setting must be made according to local, state/province, and national laws, rules, and regulations.

Instructional Methods and Curriculum

In determining an appropriate curriculum for a student with E/BD, the following must be considered:

- The curriculum should provide for the unique needs (social,   emotional, behavioral, and academic) of each student, as well as the traditional educational demands of the regular school.
- The curriculum should focus on the specific factors that caused an individual student to be eligible for special education services. These factors should be addressed as goals and objectives in the student's IEP.

Instructional methods, which should also be individually determined and written in the student's IEP, include (a) the ways in which information will be presented and modified (e.g., individualization, direct instruction, lectures, workbooks, and videos) and (b) behavioral change techniques (e. g., behavior modification, counseling, and cognitive strategies). Any of these methods must be matched to the student's cognitive, social, and emotional developmental levels.

Among the curricular and methodological provisions that contribute to the success of an inclusive program are (a) co-teaching (by a regular classroom teacher and a special education teacher) of the classes in which students with E/BD are included, (b) a commitment on the part of the co-teaching team to adaptations and modifications of both what is taught and how it is presented (for the entire class, not just the student with E/BD), (c) the use of student peer facilitators in tutoring and conflict resolution, (d) flexibility in scheduling for individual students and classes, and (e) integration of social skills instruction into the curriculum. Methods and materials that have proved to be effective with both students with disabilities and those without should be used in every class.

Program Design and Operation

A careful review of the current program should be conducted, which should result in precise statements of (a) needs or problems, (b) recommendations for action, and (c) written policies and procedures. All planning committees, as well as the entire program faculty and staff, should be involved in and kept informed about this program review. Specific suggestions for program review are included in the handbook from the National Needs Analysis Project (Grosenick et al, 1986).

Program design. A study of the program design will reveal components that are already in place, those that are needed, and those that must be changed to accommodate students with E/BD in the regular school. The review should also detail the community services (individuals and agencies) that are already available and those that must be developed. It will be necessary to maintain the full continuum of service options (special education and related services), even if the program itself is housed in the regular school. These services may be provided directly by the school program or purchased through joint agreements with other districts or public or private providers. The program for E/BD must continue to reflect the requirements of federal law, state/province statutes and rules, and local regulations and guidelines.

Some program policies and procedures may need to be rewritten to accommodate students with E/BD in the regular school (e.g., preferral and referral procedures, discipline, reinforcers, transportation, transition, and program exit), and the need for new policies may emerge. For example, there is often a problem in determining equitable case loads for teachers

and ancillary personnel who are working with E/BD students in the regular classroom. Maher (1987) has reported on a high school program for students with E/BD which limits (to two) the number of students with disabilities assigned to any one classroom at one time. Another possibility is a "weighting" system, assigning a number to each student as an indicator of his/her severity of disturbance. One teacher might have three "Ones" (with mild problems) during a class period, while another might have one "Three" (with severe problems) and a reduced class load.

Program operation. A review of program operation will address both (a) the adequacy of material and fiscal resources (e. g., facilities, transportation, materials and supplies, and funding) and (b) the availability and caliber of personnel assigned to the program (including the amount and quality of administrative and supervisory support). Modifications of facilities may be necessary to accommodate students with E/BD. For example, there will always be a need for a "safe space" within the school (for those times when the student must leave the regular classroom for a period of time) as well as trained personnel to supervise that space. Appropriate space and equipment, which might previously have been provided in only one school setting, must be available in every facility in which a student with E/BD is included.

The need for collaboration. Inclusion of students with E/BD will also require an enormous amount of collaboration between and among regular and special educators, parents, administrators, ancillary personnel, multiple service providers, and business professionals who may be involved with the program. Time must be provided during the school day for communication, networking, inservice training, and planning between and among all individuals involved. This will necessitate the hiring of more personnel--both part-time or temporary (e. g., substitutes for inservice training days and planning periods) and fulltime (e. g., instructional aides and additional teachers).

The costs of inclusion. Planners of inclusive programs should be aware that these programs will cost more, not less, than a more traditional special education program. The director of a federally funded project that is investigating the integration of students with disabilities has commented that even more special education personnel, rather than fewer, are needed when students with disabilities are served in general education (Alberg, cited in

Behrmann, 1992).   While children with severe developmental disabilities or serious medical conditions may need medical services as adjuncts to their school program, children with emotional/behavioral disorders will need case management, mental health services, and crisis intervention. The provision of these additional services in all regular schools will be costly. Inclusion is not a money-saving proposition.

Funding sources. In some districts, collaborative efforts have been funded through a combination of regular and special education funds. Planning committees should also consider other possibilities for fiscal support (besides local tax money), such as grants from the Office of Special Education Programs, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Child and Adolescent Social Services Programs (CASSP), and private foundations. Subcommittees could be assigned specifically to the task of developing proposals for such funding.

Personnel training. The characteristics, beliefs, knowledge, and skills of all individuals involved in the inclusive program must be addressed in both the self-study and subsequent planning. Surveys, observations, and discussions may be used to identify the education and training needs of teachers, administrators, parents, and ancillary personnel, and inservice training in areas of need should be begun as soon as possible. There will be a need for a variety of training options, as faculty and staff will have to assume new responsibilities related to providing support for students with E/BD in the regular school program.

It is extremely important to include the building administrator in the inservice training, as the effectiveness of the program may well depend on this individual's attitudes, knowledge, and leadership ability. The support of the principal is of paramount importance to the success of the inclusive program.

Regular education teachers are probably already knowledgeable about some teaching techniques used in special education settings, such as direct instruction and cooperative learning. They will need training in (a) special education procedures and requirements (e.g., IEPs, due process, and evaluation), (b) the nature and needs of students with E/BD, (c) classroom management of disturbed and disruptive students, (d) learning strategies and social skills instruction, (e) therapeutic group procedures and affective education, and (f) crisis intervention. Experienced and skilled teachers of E/BD, who should already possess those skills, will need

training in regular education policies, procedures, and curriculum. For both regular and special education teachers, specific training in team-building and collaboration is essential. Schools should also offer support groups and education for families of students with E/BD (Guetzloe, 1994b).

Inservice training components focus on such topics as (a) student profiles, (b) functional behavior analysis, (c) reality therapy, (d) avoiding power/control issues, (e) crisis intervention, and (f) physical restraint. Options for inservice training should include the following (Guetzloe, 1994c):

- A "menu" of offerings, rather than the same training requirements for all personnel.
- Long-term offerings, rather than a "one-shot-dog-and-pony show."
- Teacher support groups and mentors
- A professional library of books, instructional materials, videos, and audiocassette tapes.
- University courses, workshops, and consultants.
- National, international, and regional forums, institutes, conferences, and conventions.

CCBD forum participants have discussed a variety of commercially available training programs that have proved helpful to teachers and administrators involved in inclusive programs for students with E/BD (Bullock & Gable, 1994a, 1994b). It appears that all of these programs were well received–if inservice training was provided and the administrators, faculty, and staff were committed to their use.

Exit and Transition Procedures

Criteria for program exit. A student should be allowed to exit the special education program when he/she no longer meets the criteria for eligibility, whether the student is receiving services in a regular classroom or in a more restrictive placement. Criteria for both transition to a less restrictive environment and decertification should parallel the criteria for identification or eligibility, be written in the student's IEP, and used as goals and objectives for the individual student's program. The following are examples of such criteria:

- The student demonstrates social skills in his/her interactions with peers and teachers that allow for satisfactory interpersonal relationships.
- The severity, frequency, and/or duration of the interfering behavior or affect no longer

impedes the educational progress of the student or of other students in the classroom.

- The student exhibits adequate academic performance in terms of quantity and quality of his/her work which allows for success in the regular classroom.

A criterion statement for a student who will be placed in the regular classroom might be "The student exhibits the ability to achieve in the regular school environment <u>with only the assistance available to students without disabilities</u>."

Terms used in criterion statements should be operationalized so they are clearly understood by everyone involved in the evaluation process. For example, the phrase "success in the regular classroom" might be operationalized as "the achievement of at least 'C' grades." Further, in programs for students with E/BD, we should include a criterion of being able to generalize learnings to community settings as well as the regular school environment. Many years ago, special education professionals became aware that a student might be labeled "retarded" only during the school day and considered "normal" after school hours. Students with E/BD might exhibit the reverse–being included in the school but not in the community. We need to ensure that we do not have a "seven-hour normal child" at the time of program exit.

<u>Planning for transition</u>. Transition to a less restrictive environment should be gradual and unobtrusive, rather than "cold turkey" inclusion. It will also be necessary to increase, rather than decrease, support services for both the student and the family during transition from more restrictive settings to the regular school. It may be helpful to have a transition checklist to follow, such as the transition plan promulgated for the Lane School in Eugene, Oregon (George & George, 1993), which includes the following steps:

- Notify appropriate persons that the student is approaching the transition period.
- Specify anticipated dates for the beginning of transition. Try to time transition according to "windows of opportunity" such as Spring Break, Semester Break, or a job opening.
- Assess the receiving environment: teachers and other receiving personnel, types of services available (e.g., remedial reading, counseling, and vocational education) and extracurricular offerings (e.g., sports, music, clubs, etc.).
- Invite receiving personnel to observe the student in the present school setting and to examine samples of the student's work.
- Introduce the student to the new environment by carrying out the following: (a)

conference meeting with the receiving teacher (or job supervisor), (b) a peer-guided tour of the new setting, (c) job-shadowing, (d) a meeting with the principal, counselor, and other personnel, and (e) a trial or part-time placement.

- Plan for continuous monitoring and tracking in the new environment, including the procedures to be followed (what, when, how often) and the person(s) responsible.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an ongoing process of inquiry, data-gathering, and decision-making and is particularly important in inclusive programs. Program evaluation should answer the question, "Are we meeting the goals for both individual students and the total program?" Specific procedures for planning and carrying out a program evaluation are included in the administrator's guide from the National Needs Analysis Project (Grosenick et al., 1986).

The Need for Research

There is now a tremendous need for accurate information regarding the short- and long-term impact (on students with and those without E/BD) of the inclusion of students with E/BD in the regular school program. Recent reviews of research have revealed a lack of empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of inclusion of students with E/BD (MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996). Future investigations should address the social and emotional development, as well as the academic progress, of all students in the educational setting. We need accurate information--not propaganda.

Conclusion

A critical current responsibility of both special and regular education professionals is to determine, to the best of our collective ability, the policies, procedures, facilities, and services that must be in place to ensure the educational success of all children with disabilities that will be included in the regular school program. This discussion has focused on program elements that must be addressed in the design of appropriate services for students with E/BD.

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