

# FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

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## LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR EDUCATION OF HANDICAPPED

*The nature of this topic varies substantially from the pattern of articles appearing in Focus on Exceptional Children. This is the first time that an issue of this newsletter has been devoted to what might be considered a position on one piece of legislation. However, Public Law 93-380 may well prove to be a landmark piece of legislation. Because of its significance and the implication it has for all participants in the education of exceptional children, the Editorial Board has opted to invite Dr. S. J. Bonham, Jr. to share his views of this important piece of legislation.*

*Dr. Bonham, Director of the Division of Special Education in the Ohio Department of Education, has had broad experience in state government and is sensitive to the implications of this legislation. As a further variance from the previous pattern of issues, Dr. Bonham has been encouraged to be informal and to show his personal views when appropriate.*

### PUBLIC LAW 93-380: A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE HANDICAPPED

*S. J. Bonham, Jr.<sup>1</sup>*

Public Law 93-380 contains the 1974 Amendments of the Education of the Handicapped Act. It has been hailed by some as the most significant piece of state or federal legislation ever passed and roundly attacked by others.

The restricted and inadequate appropriation plus the time frames imposed by the law seem to support those who attack the bill. On the other hand, the brilliantly articulated rights of the handicapped in public education justify the position of those who hail this legislation as a significant breakthrough.

## HISTORY

The history of federal legislation for the handicapped is long, detailed, and fragmented. The initiation of significant funding assistance to state educational agencies for expanding and developing educational programs for the handicapped began with the Title VI Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This Title VI amendment introduced specific legislation and authorized token appropriations for flowing funds to state educational agencies. They, in turn, were responsible for assisting local education agencies in project and program development for handicapped children.

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1. Dr. Bonham is the Director of the Division of Special Education, Ohio Department of Education, Columbus.

Title VI of ESEA was amended by the 91st Congress in Public Law 91-230 and became Title VI-B, Education of the Handicapped Act. Under 91-230, other components for the handicapped dealing with such topics as teacher training, research, media centers, regional service centers, child demonstration projects, and early childhood education funding were consolidated under the same bill in Sections C through G.

Title VI, Part B, Education of the Handicapped, Section 611 through 621, 93-380 extends comprehensive federal legislation for the handicapped under the title "Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1974."

The amendments continue the Federal government's expanding role and active participation in the development of educational programs for the handicapped.

#### CONTENT AND SUBSTANCE

On August 21, 1974, Public Law 93-380 became the law of the land.

The 1974 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act contained in 93-380 will undoubtedly be identified by future decades as a major breakthrough for handicapped children. Few would deny the import of this legislation. In two printed pages the United States Congress

adopted legislation which captured the essence of litigation, confrontation, and legislation which had begun on behalf of handicapped children soon after World War II.

The content of this legislation will be recognized by most responsible professional personnel within the educational community as well as by most parents and lay personnel outside of education as a clear articulation of a Bill of Rights for the handicapped child.

The language used to describe extremely complex concepts such as the philosophy of mainstreaming, the simple statement concerning a child's right to an education regardless of the severity of handicap, and the concise definition of the handicapped child's rights to certain procedural safeguards characterize the quality of the legislation under consideration.

In its present form, Title VI-B of 93-380 completes the task begun in 1965. With the most recent amendments, the act defines the rights of the handicapped child to an educational opportunity appropriate to his or her needs. Further, the law lays the foundation for the development of a national educational program for handicapped children which overrides deficiencies and discriminations against handicapped children which have been practiced by most states to varying degrees for well over 200 years. It may be significant that such legislation was enacted by Congress in the year preceding the bicentennial recognition of the life and history of our nation.

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#### APPROPRIATIONS

It seems unquestionable that the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1974 contained within Public Law 93-380 will take their place in the history of federal legislation as one of the great moments in educational history. It seems equally clear that the continued failure of the U. S. Congress to address itself to the resources required to implement the adopted programs and mandates contributes to the demise of special education as we have known it since World War II. As has been the practice of Congress for a decade and a half, the appropriation gave only token support to the mandates and program concepts that were part of the original legislation.

Almost from the beginning, authorization levels considered necessary to implement the mandates were estimated

to be two-thirds of a billion dollars. The final supplemental appropriation signed by the President in December, 1974, contained 100 million dollars. This appropriation level was less than 20% of the money Congress itself estimated would be needed to implement the law. Modifications in formulas and funding of additional trust territory resulted in an actual state-by-state appropriation at 10% of the original authorization.

States have long struggled with legislative mandates of one kind or another which were not accompanied by appropriations. The tragic history of such legislative practice has repeatedly demonstrated that legislative bodies may order, but programs will not emerge unless resources are made available. This history, accompanied by the increasing disregard for such mandates, is part of the tragedy that is special education today. If enforcement is stringent, the lack of federal dollars for program implementation may well create opposing political forces of major dimensions.

A number of states have already reported active opposition by statewide PTA organizations, organizations of school administrators and school board members, as well as continued opposition by teacher unions to the further expansion of special education with either state or federal dollars. This opposition is in reaction to the relatively higher costs required to provide full and appropriate educational opportunities for handicapped children. It has been estimated that the full implementation of Title VI-B of 93-380 on behalf of the handicapped will require elementary and secondary schools of this nation to spend approximately 30% of their total budget for the education of an estimated 10% of the student population.

The political implications of a mandate without money are further demonstrated by the fact that the increases in Public Law 93-380 of the Education of the Handicapped Act represent approximately 1% of a state's total expenditure on behalf of the handicapped. In general, 95% to 99% of the total cost of educating handicapped children is currently borne by state and local governments. The implementation of federal mandates modifying current educational practices when the Federal government is sharing 1-2% of the cost may generate confrontation between the various levels of government that may destroy the very objectives which Congress attempted to achieve. In a time of inflation and recession, mandates without accompanying resources can destroy the programs they were designed to expand and support.

## FUNDING PERIODS

The issue of Public Law 93-380 is further complicated by the appropriation history behind the bill. Since the Supplemental Appropriation Bill containing funds for the implementation of the new mandates of 93-380 was signed in December of 1974, the school year was half over before money was even appropriated. By the time the necessary guidelines, rules and regulations, and other required paper work needed to qualify states for the additional money had been completed, an increase from 47.5 million to 100 million dollars was delayed until May of 1975. In spite of Congress' best intent, it should be remembered that no state received any additional federal funds for implementing the amendment requirements until the school year was over. States are now facing the difficult task of managing fiscal resources on a carry-over basis in an attempt to get the best possible utilization of federal dollars out of the additional money made available in the appropriation.

Unlike most federal legislation, Congress did not pass a two-year appropriation which means that the states can anticipate receiving the total federal dollars available under Title VI-B of 93-380 for fiscal year (FY) 1976. This somewhat unusual legislative appropriation is complicated by the fact that additional requirements activated for FY 76 will undoubtedly delay the flow of FY 76 dollars to the states until sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In its attempts to assist the states in providing full educational opportunities for handicapped children and youth, Congress has created a major problem by not allowing dollars to flow and be used with maximum efficiency.

## STATE PLAN AMENDMENTS

A typical provision of most federal legislation requires that states submit plans by which they outline procedures for program and service implementation in order to qualify for federal funds. The format for these state plans is frequently detailed and complex. The process for review often involves participation by representatives of local educational agencies, state educational agency staff, the governor's office, and other mechanisms within state government charged with the responsibility for coordinating the utilization of state resources.

Further reviews are required in Washington within the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and with other

agencies within the Office of Education. The development and clearance process for amending a state plan normally requires a minimum of four to six months. It was Congress' intent to phase in the mandates of 93-380 gradually. Unfortunately, the delay in appropriation actually resulted in most states being in the process of developing two state plan amendments for two separate fiscal years within the same six month period. For example, the initial draft of the Ohio State Plan for Fiscal Year 75 was begun in December, 1974, and finally submitted in March, 1975. Initial work on the Ohio State Plan for Fiscal Year 76 was begun in February, 1975, and may not be completed until after school starts in 1976.

Two consequences are easily identified. First, many state agencies devoted most of their staff time during the spring of 1975 to developing state plans which qualify for what turned out to be a 1% increase in the total budget for the education of handicapped children. The other consequence was that the late submission of state plan amendments for FY 75 meant that grant documents were not received until late in May of that school year. Therefore, for all practical purposes, no additional money was available to the states under this new legislation until the end of the first school year in which it was to have been implemented.

The waste of professional staff time at the state and local level is a classic example of the unavoidable inefficiency in responding to major social and educational needs that often accompanies small federal appropriations.

## BUREAU OF EDUCATION

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped was charged with the responsibility for implementing the mandates contained in Part B of Title VI of 93-380. One of the many difficult problems facing the Bureau during the early months of implementation was inadequate documentation concerning Congressional intent. For example, while the question of what is education appears to be a simple one to those unfamiliar with the complex problems associated with educating the handicapped, it becomes critical if one considers the implication that education means dealing with the primitive needs of the most severely handicapped child in a ward of a state institution.

Further, there was no clear indication as to the status of the current level of Title VI-B funding. Many states had entered the school year with firm commitments to local

school districts for an appropriation level which is anticipated to be the same as FY 74. Questions concerning the legality of continuing these commitments created difficulties and confusion for both the Bureau and the states.

Questions concerning Congressional intent as it related to age range, with particular reference to the children under three years of age, were answered with contradictory and arbitrary responses. Finally, open confrontations occurred over legislation intent between representatives of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and some of the professional organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children. Frequently, the lobbyists who had worked closely with legislation development assumed that the legislation contained intents that were obviously not part of the language of the law.

One of the most remarkable things about the entire process of implementing this legislation was the competency with which the staff in the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped of the Office of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Edwin W. Martin, implemented the legislation. His sensitivity to the need to facilitate communication between representatives of Congress and representatives of state educational agencies, along with the many lobbyists who have worked for so many months in support of passage of the legislation, was reflected in his plan for a series of meetings which brought these groups together, with consumers, to discuss the content and the implementation of 93-380. These conferences were rapidly followed by written reports which were reviewed by all individuals involved and were subsequently followed by the issuance of guidelines for the preparation of state plan amendments.

During the period of time when the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped was faced with the review of state plans submitted by 50 states plus the territories, the Bureau was also deeply involved in the format development for the submission of the state plan amendments for FY 76. The efficiency with which they carried out this task over a period of months continued through the summer of 1975.

Given the difficult task of implementing major changes in legislation with overlapping time frames and inadequate interpretation on many critical issues, the Bureau enjoyed one of its finest hours. While many problems are still ahead, there can be no question that the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped will be a major factor in the survival of special education and the implementation of Federal legislation.

A further appreciation of the delicacy of the task faced by the Bureau during this period of time was the conflict between Part B of Title VI and Parts C through G dealing with the education of the handicapped, which either conflicted with or ignored the mandates contained in Part B. The skillful implementation of discretionary funds to supplement and extend the state and local educational agency's capacity to respond to the mandates of Part B did much to reduce the severity of the crisis.

### **CONTENT OF PUBLIC LAW 93-380, TITLE VI-B**

With the background already provided concerning the nature of the problems associated with the implementation of this legislation, it seems appropriate to review the major contents of Part B. Since FY 75 and FY 76 state plan requirements will, for all practical purposes, be implemented during the 1975-76 school year, no attempt has been made to differentiate those mandates which were originally designed for FY 75 and those that were to be implemented in FY 76.

#### **Fiscal Changes**

The entitlements will use a funding formula based on the population of children ages 3-21 multiplied by \$8.75. This formula is then prorated on the basis of the final appropriation.

Minimum state allotments for the smaller states beginning with FY 76 were increased from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Administrative funds to the state educational agencies to facilitate implementation of Public Law 93-380 were increased from a minimum of \$100,000 per fiscal year to a minimum of \$200,000 per fiscal year beginning with FY 75.

Authorizations for FY 75 were \$100 million, for FY 76, \$100 million, and for FY 77, \$110 million.

#### **Full Service Goal**

The state plan amendments will set forth in detail the policies and procedures which it will undertake in order to assure that there is established

- a goal for providing full educational opportunities to all handicapped children

- a detailed timetable for accomplishing such a goal
- a description of the kind and number of facilities, personnel, and services necessary throughout the state to meet such a goal.

#### **Priority to Unserved**

The state plan requires that the state set forth in detail the policies and procedures which the state will undertake in order to assure that funds expended under this section are used to accomplish the goal of full services for handicapped children, and that the priority and utilization of funds will be given to the handicapped children who are not receiving an education.

#### **Procedural Safeguards**

The state plan will provide procedures for insuring that handicapped children and their parents or guardians are guaranteed procedural safeguards in decisions regarding identification, evaluation, and educational placement of handicapped children including but not limited to

- prior notice to parents or guardians of the child when the local or state educational agency proposes to change the educational placement of the child
- an opportunity for the parents or guardians to obtain an impartial due process hearing, examine all relevant records with respect to the classification or educational placement of the child, and obtain independent educational evaluation of the child
- procedures to protect the rights of the child when the parents or guardians are not known, unavailable, or the child is a ward of a state, including the assignment of an individual to act as a surrogate for the parents or guardians
- provisions to assure that the decisions rendered in the impartial due process hearing required by this paragraph shall be binding on all parties subject to appropriate administrative or judicial appeal.

#### **Nondiscriminatory Testing**

The state plan will provide procedures to insure that the testing and evaluation materials and procedures utilized for

the purposes of classification and placement of handicapped children will be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.

#### Child Identification System

The state plan will set forth in detail the policies and procedures which the state will undertake in order to assure that all children residing in the state who are handicapped regardless of the severity of the handicap and who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated, including the practical method of determining which children are currently receiving needed special education and related services and which children are not currently receiving needed special education and related services.

#### Least Restrictive Alternative

The state plan will assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children (including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities) are educated with children who are not handicapped and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

#### Confidentiality

The states will adopt policies and procedures in accordance with detailed criteria prescribed by the Commissioner to protect the confidentiality of data and information received by the state as a result of the child identification procedures.

#### Public Notice

State plan amendments will be available to parents and the general public at least 30 days prior to submission to the Office of Education.

This legislation is found on pages 99 and 100 of Public Law 93-380, in Sections 612 and 615 of Part B-Education

of the Handicapped, of Title VI, Extension and Revision of Related Elementary and Secondary Programs, of Public Law 93-380, dated August 21, 1974.

#### CONGRESSIONAL INTENT

As is customary in Federal legislation, the committees responsible for the development of the legislation frequently issue supplemental reports interpreting the intent of Congress. This is particularly significant since many issues referred to General Counsel in the Office of Education for rulings are based on the language of the committee report when legislation is not sufficiently clear. Therefore, the supplemental reports contain language which may take on the force of law.

#### Senate Report No. 93-763

Significant interpretation can be found concerning Title VI, Education of the Handicapped, in this Senate committee report.

While the committee fully understands the pressure on State and local education budgets, as well as the many problems involved in establishing and maintaining a full range of services for handicapped children, the continued refusal or inability of our education system to seek out and identify handicapped children despite existing financial constraints is a clear denial of rights to handicapped children and their parents.

The committee further indicated that it was their intention to

require that the State set forth a detailed plan of the policies and procedures it will undertake in order to assure that all handicapped children residing within the State are identified, located, and evaluated, as well as to assure that the State has established a goal of providing full training and educational opportunities for all handicapped children together with a timetable for accomplishing this goal and a description of additional facilities, personnel, and services necessary throughout the State in order to meet such goal.

Another very significant comment by the committee is as follows.

The committee wishes to emphasize that this should insure that all children who are handicapped can be identified no matter where they reside within the State, whether they are currently institutionalized in State or private facilities, or whether they are currently receiving the benefit of any other educational services or training.

Another quote dealing with the issue of child identification which further interprets the law suggests

the data which are collected by the State pursuant to these new requirements should be collected in such a form as to distinguish between children who are currently receiving full and appropriate educational services, children who are receiving some but not all necessary services, and children without the benefit of any services.

### House of Representatives

In Report #93-805, the Committee on Education and Labor discussed its additional views on the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments.

Again, as it relates to the mandates for child identification, the House Committee spoke as follows.

First, that the State identify and evaluate all children residing in the State who are handicapped and indicate for each child the extent to which a free appropriate public education is being provided. It is the committee's intent that the provisions of this amendment relate to each handicapped child resident of the State regardless of what State, local, private or federal agency may be presently serving such child.

One of the most significant statements in response to the priority for handicapped children is contained in the following quote: "It is the committee's intent that the timetable include as well, a resource allocation plan that details how the state intends to finance the implementation of the plan."

Consider too the House's articulation of the rights of the handicapped child.

In recent years the federal and state courts, state legislators and state executives have been increasingly upholding the principle that these children are legally and morally entitled to a free appropriate public education. It is to this end that this Amendment is addressed. For it establishes for the first time in federal policy that handicapped children are entitled to an appropriate free public education.

### GENERAL CONCERNS

A number of concerns expressed by representatives of state educational agencies and local school districts as well as some of the problems associated with the implementation of 93-380 at the national level have already been discussed. It is apparent that such sweeping legislation presents different problems to different states. In a nation such as ours, the level of program development varies

widely. Some states have had a state legislative mandate for years but have done little or nothing to comply with the development of appropriate programs and services. Other states have operated without legislative mandates but have made significant strides towards the goal of full services for all handicapped children. Still other states are already in full compliance with 93-380 because of state legislation that has already been enacted and funded. Even within states, a wide discrepancy in educational opportunities for handicapped children continues to exist because of accidents of wealth, geography, demographic characteristics, and transportation facilities. Finally, some states have reported that the earmarking of Title VI-B funds for those children not receiving an education would, if rigidly enforced, prevent them from utilizing the funds. They have already entered into extensive child identification programs and believe that all handicapped children are currently being provided an educational program.

States providing educational programs for all handicapped as well as other states that have made significant strides toward that goal report a high number of identified handicapped children in regular classrooms need special education programs and services. In these cases the problem is not so much the wide variation in ability of states to respond to the mandate, as it is the state's obligation to set priorities that are responsive to the needs of the children within the local school districts in that state. Such issues are a part of the continuing dialogue between representatives of school districts and the Office of Education.

### THE FUTURE

Public Law 93-380 has been characterized as a landmark piece of legislation which articulates the Bill of Rights for the education of the handicapped child and youth. The problems associated with the appropriations and with the implementation of such legislation have been discussed.

Three conditions will be necessary if the full impact of Public Law 93-380, Section VI-B, Education of the Handicapped, is to achieve the objectives for which it was born.

First, the United States Congress must be willing to exercise considerable restraint in the passage of additional legislation carrying new mandates and management burdens. They must stand up to the continuing pressure by a small but articulate group of dissatisfied parents whose

children are not yet fully and appropriately served. They must have faith in the task that they achieved in the language of the Title VI-B Amendment and give the states and the local education agencies time to achieve compliance.

Second, Congress must also be willing to continue to increase the resources committed to the implementation of the mandates of Public Law 93-380. No one can deny the rights of the handicapped child to a full educational opportunity, and few people will quarrel with the soundness of the concepts embodied in the current legislation. If those outcomes are to be achieved or approximated, the Federal government must be able to assume a greater share of the burden of the excess cost associated with the education of the handicapped child.

Third, the quality and the quantity of the professional staff available to the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped in the Office of Education must continue to be expanded and developed to facilitate and implement the full impact of Public Law 93-380. It is only through the leadership at the national level can the Federal and state governments take full advantage of the language of Title VI-B. The ultimate decision as to whether or not 93-380 can be meaningful legislation will rest largely on the extent to which the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped is adequately staffed to provide the necessary leadership to the states and local education agencies to achieve the objectives so effectively outlined.

It is clear that the final evaluation of Title VI-B will be made, not on the quality of the legislation, but on the skill with which it is implemented. That skill implies patience on the part of Congress, resources from federal, state, and local levels, and the highest quality of leadership from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the state educational agencies.

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*FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN* newsletter binder is now available for \$3.50.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO A PROSPECTIVE TEACHER OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

C. Milton Blue<sup>1</sup>

*Author's Note: As a teacher, therapist, administrator, consultant, and program developer in special education over a period of more than 20 years, I have become increasingly concerned about the quality of education that is demonstrated in classes and other services for handicapped children. At this point in time, young people's interest in entering the field of special education has increased.*

1. National media campaigns have increased the general public's awareness of the needs of exceptional children and the job opportunities contained therein.
2. Television, radio programs, and films glamorize and romanticize the work pertaining to exceptional children (e.g., "Marcus Welby, M.D.," "Young Doctor Kildare," Charlie).
3. Youth's natural altruistic desire to better mankind, his environment, health, status, etc.
4. Reduction of job opportunities in general education in many prized geographical locales.

*Special education today finds itself in a more enviable recruitment position than heretofore possible. Student quantity is present! It is time to increase the focus on product quality, and a consideration of the abilities and drive of the entering student is an excellent place to start. It is this consideration that motivates the writing of the following letter. The intended audiences are high school graduating seniors, college undergraduates who are considering changing their field of study, and others who are actively involved in career selection or change. Directors of special education in college and university training programs, guidance counselors, local and state directors, and others are granted permission — indeed urged — to reproduce and distribute this letter.*

1. Dr. Blue is Professor of Education, University of Georgia.



My dear friend,

I was happy to receive your letter of inquiry about the fields of special education and to learn of your interest in becoming a teacher of handicapped children. The program at this university is one of many in the United States, most of which offer financial assistance to some students in the form of scholarships, work assistance, student loans, etc. Job opportunities after graduation are, and will undoubtedly remain, plentiful in all of the fields of work with the handicapped.

I used the phrase "fields of work" to make an important point for your consideration—special education is not one field but many. It includes people with varying kinds of training who are working with children with varying kinds of problems. In one university program emphasis may be placed on preparing professional persons to deal with the education problems of deaf children or mentally retarded children, while another university in the same state may emphasize one or both areas plus others. You will find that, depending upon your interest, it is possible to study in depth the problems of blind children, the emotionally disturbed, speech defective persons, and others. In addition to specialization, you will acquire some knowledge about many kinds of handicapping conditions in any thorough teacher training program. To learn more specifically about the many areas of work with the disabled, including both therapy and education, I am enclosing copies of "Careers in Special Education" published by the Council for Exceptional Children<sup>2</sup> and "The Most Important Thing in the World" published by the National Easter Seal Society<sup>3</sup>.

There are other nonspecific and more personal factors that must be considered regardless of the field of interest. That is to say, there are needed personal attributes that are common across all fields if a person is to become a happy, productive, and contributing worker with handicapped children. The remainder of my comments will have to do with these general considerations.

You will find that in a university there are many areas of study that deal with the education and training of children, but not one of them is as personally demanding as those fields which attempt to influence the behavior

of handicapped persons. Learning to do an adequate job of teaching nondisabled 8- or 9-year-old children, for example, is within the capabilities of any person who has reasonable intelligence and desire, a smidgin of patience, and enough skills and abilities to organize and present materials for learning that have been prepared and selected by others for the teacher's use. This is true because there are great similarities in the needs and learning characteristics of "average" children of a given age; therefore, specific goals, techniques of teaching and commercially prepared materials will be applicable to large groups. This does not hold true for handicapped children even when they are grouped by age and/or disability, thereby making additional teacher capabilities mandatory for successful teaching. The differences in needs and learning characteristics will outweigh the similarities from child to child. Some prepared materials are available, but they are seldom applicable to groups of children and are useful primarily when the teacher matches them to the individual needs of a child. In most instances the teacher finds that she must modify available techniques and materials or develop her own. Therefore, we in special education are constantly on the lookout for students who are intellectually bright and curious—the creative ones who enjoy viewing a problem and calculating the possible steps to solution, for exceptional children present diverse problems which can be approached by numerous paths. A good special education teacher, then, is not just a teacher but a program developer who speculates and experiments and has sufficient flexibility to shift to another possible solution when something does not work.

As you can see, the fields of special education are really cut out for persons who are looking for a life's work that is individual in nature and not just a day-to-day chore that yields a pay check on the last day of each month.

The fields of special education are demanding in another respect—the personal satisfaction that is derived from one's job. One cannot be happy in special education if one craves immediate reward in the form of instant, positive results. Work with handicapped persons certainly does yield results but, for the most part, only in small steps over extended periods of time. Training will help you to identify positive movement no matter how small and to utilize such movement in building toward a larger goal. Patient and methodical drive which endures optimistically is, therefore, an absolute essential for the well-being of both the teacher and the children with whom she will come in contact.

2. 1201 Sixteenth St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, 1968.

3. 2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60612, 1968.

The reason for your interest in becoming a teacher of handicapped children is also an important consideration. The national media has in recent years painted a somewhat romantic picture of work with the disabled—romantic, that is, on the basis of personal fulfillment and contribution to man. Such factors are true but may be misleading. The motivation to enter this field as a result of a drive to “feel needed” or to “serve those less fortunate” is commendable but possibly dangerous. On the positive side, it is always desirable to select a field in which the reward is more than just a monetary matter; there is much to be derived from dealing with handicapped children that is personally satisfying to the well adjusted, demanding teacher. On the other hand, the view of the disabled as being “less fortunate” and the drive to satisfy some inwardly felt need “to be needed” can be disastrous for both the teacher and the child. You will find that you cannot become the “savior” of little kiddies who have “felt the hand of fate.” In short, motivation to enter a field to satisfy one’s own emotional needs will not lead to the fulfillment of the real needs of the disabled and, in all probability, will lead only to unhappiness for the worker.

My comments to this point call for a careful self-appraisal of your motivation and your presently developed feelings and abilities. However, I do not wish to needlessly discourage you. I know that you are trying to make a decision concerning your future career and that you want that decision to be correct for you personally and for the field you choose. The positive characteristics that I have discussed cannot all be present to the highest degree in any given individual; no one is perfect. Furthermore, these positive attributes may be present without your conscious awareness. As a further check on the suitability of special education for your life’s work, I suggest that you find an opportunity to observe handicapped children. There are classes for the retarded and perhaps even a hospital or public school situation where crippled, deaf, or other handicapped children are being educated in your community. Contact the school principal or the teacher; I am certain they will welcome you. Don’t just walk in, observe a few minutes, and walk out. Find opportunities to interact with the children during several visits. Do not be overly concerned if your initial feelings are of pity and remorse for such feelings are perfectly normal, natural reactions instilled by the society in which you live. Apart from such feelings, look for an awareness

of challenge within yourself. If challenge is there, the feelings of pity will temper with time and experience to an empathy which expresses itself in your full expectancy that children with such problems can be improved and that you are one who can search for and mount efforts to achieve improvement.

I hope the foregoing will assist you in making a career choice. If you have other questions, perhaps about our program specifically, I will be more than happy to meet with you personally at a time when you can be on campus.

Sincerely yours,

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## ALERT

The 1976 International Conference of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities will be held March 3-6, 1976, at the Seattle Center, Seattle, Washington. For further information, contact:

ACLD Conference Headquarters  
217 9th North  
Seattle WA 98109

On April 4-9, 1976, the 54th Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children will be held in the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois. For additional information, contact:

The Council for Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston VA 22091

## RESOURCE MATERIALS

F. Vinton Smith, Jr. and Wade C. Wieters developed a new test and training program designed to measure the attitudes of educators toward mental retardation and also to effect attitude change through training. The program is divided into three (3) booklets. The *Administrator's Manual* contains the standardization and other information on the 75-item test or scale which samples the attitudes

and understandings of mental retardation. The test has been shown to be valid in demonstrating changes in attitudes on pre- and post-test administrations. The *Participant's Manual* describes the information needed for participating in workshops on attitude change. A series of questions and appropriate readings accompany each of the 26 modules in the training program. The *Instructor's Handbook* includes the films and other materials needed in order to be a trainer of attitudes and explains the type of simulation activities most successful in changing the attitudes of teachers toward the retarded, whether they be regular educators or teachers of the handicapped. For additional information, contact Dr. Wade Wieters, College of Education, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, 29208.

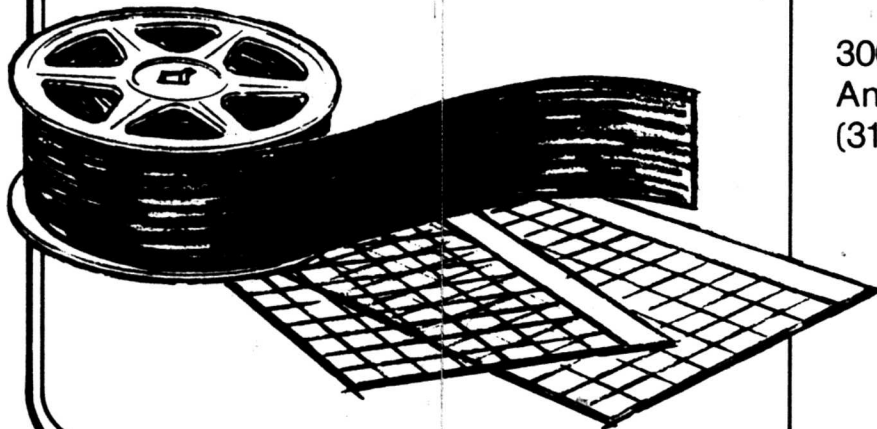
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# CLASSROOM FORUM

*Edited by Alwyn Holloway, Center Coordinator  
South Dekalb Children's Center*

I am a behavior disorders teacher and have received a large number of referrals on children who need some individual time for remediation of academic deficits as well as for a one-to-one relationship with another person. Because of the large numbers of these children, it is impossible for me to see each individually on a regular basis. Do you have any suggestions as to how I might be able to provide some program to meet these needs?

There are many children with mild behavioral and/or academic problems who desperately need individual time. They need help to build a more positive self-concept—whether it be through academic successes or through establishing a positive relationship with another person. The individual time is vital, yet a teacher can spread her time just so far. Because our system has experienced similar problems, we have developed a program utilizing nearby high school students who are willing to use their study halls or a free period two or three days a week to work with an elementary aged youngster. Recruiting can be done through clubs (such as Future Teachers), classes, or other special interest groups. Often a high school counselor is able to help in obtaining tutors.

Of course, guidelines are necessary for establishing tutorial arrangements. Some of the guidelines we utilize include the following:

1. Tutors must have at least a *C* average. (We do not want to interfere with a student's own academic progress.)
2. Tutors must be in grades 10-12. (Transportation is often a problem for younger students. Both maturity

and experience aid in handling the responsibilities of tutoring.)

3. Tutors must be approved by their high school counselor.
4. Tutors must be on time and consistent in their responsibilities. They must sign in and out of their own school as well as the elementary school in which they tutor. Records are kept in the school office.

Because of the importance of the experience being a positive one for both tutor and student, training is vital. Usually we begin by presenting a general background in special education—its services and children. Tutors are exposed to basic principles of positive reinforcement and behavior modification, and many times we do role playing of various hypothetical situations to apply the theories discussed. We also emphasize appropriate setting of limits and reflective listening.

In order to give the tutors support and feedback, supervision takes place on a regular basis according to the amount of time available. Meetings of tutors are held every three or four weeks at the high school. During this time the tutors discuss problems and progress of their children. They share success experiences as well as offer practical suggestions for different situations.

The tutorial arrangement can prove to be beneficial to all involved. First, the child begins to realize that learning is not necessarily a painful experience but can be satisfying and fun. Tutoring provides the child with an older interested person who can help the child realize more of his inner potential. Second, not only the child but the tutor as well benefits. The tutor experiences some self-fulfillment in trying to help another person. Third, the entire community can benefit from an enhancement of the school program.

Regardless of your individual school system, there is undoubtedly some way to utilize high school students, and perhaps some upper elementary students, to provide additional services to children who need that extra attention.

We are grateful to Phyllis Harrison, Coordinator, Special Help Tutorial Program, Dekalb County, Georgia, for writing this column.