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Teacher Training for LRE Mainstreaming and Diverse Classrooms

By

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Teacher Training for LRE Mainstreaming and Diverse Classrooms

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## Abstract

Since the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, classrooms in the United States have changed over the years. These laws have added numerous responsibilities for teachers, especially the Least Restrictive Environment mandate that places more students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. A review of the literature shows that even though more skills are required to teach in more diverse classrooms, teacher training programs have not changed in response to this need. A second problem related to insufficient teacher training is the increase in students being referred to special education programs because the regular education teachers haven't learned how to successfully teach students with special needs. There is a dire need to modify teacher training programs from separate general and special education departments to more integrated, collaborative programs. An overhaul of teacher training programs will be a time-intensive endeavor; therefore, other short term solutions for teachers need to be considered. Preparing competent, effective teachers will ensure that laws affecting the classrooms will be carried out in the way they were intended so that all students receive the best education possible in the environment best suited to their needs. There is a need for continued research to determine the best training strategies to fulfill the needs of all teachers, which in turn will result in the best outcomes for all students.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right that must be made available to all on equal terms.

Chief Justice Earl Warren, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)

The efforts of parents and advocacy groups, in addition to special education case law, have improved educational opportunities for all students, especially those with disabilities (Yell, 2006). Several landmark courts cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Mill v. Board of Education* have resulted in more students with disabilities being placed in regular education classrooms (Brown, 1954; Mills, 1972; Yell, 2006). Several laws were passed over the years giving students with disabilities not only more rights to be included in schools, but also more legal protection. These laws include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Yell, 2006).

More responsibilities to schools and teachers arrived with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which was enacted in response to low academic achievement nationwide (NCLB, 2001).

Finally, in addition to the added responsibilities regular education teachers face by having to serve more students within the 13 disability categories in their classrooms, other student variables have put increased demands on teachers. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2009 that 21% of students aged 5-17 spoke another language besides English at home and 5% of students overall have difficulty speaking English (NCES, 2011). Since the

passage of *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972) there have been more students with behavioral disorders in the regular education classrooms because, based on the opinion of this court case, they, too, have a right to a free appropriate education under the law and can't be excluded on the basis of their behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). More students have been prenatally exposed to alcohol, drugs, HIV, homelessness, and poverty (Putnam, Spiegel, & Bruininks, 1995) which affects academics and behavior.

A very controversial aspect of the legal changes involves the mandate for the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which states that to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities should be educated alongside students without disabilities in the regular education classroom, and removed only if education can't be achieved with the use of supplementary aids and services (IDEA, 1997; Yell, 2006). The law puts the burden of proof on the schools and teachers when a student is moved from a least restrictive environment to a more restrictive environment (Shanker, 1980) yet the law doesn't give schools the criteria for determining the least restrictive environment (Nix, 1977; Spencer & Simpson, 2009).

Unfortunately, court cases have resulted that determine the particulars of the least restrictive environment and in fact Federal Circuit Courts have given standards for determining placements within the least restrictive environments (Thomas & Rapport, 1998; Yell, 2006). Osborne and Dimattia (1995) boldly added that if the schools don't take the lead on educational restructuring in order to educate all students in the least restrictive environment, the courts will.

Even though the legal mandates that have been challenging schools have been in place for many years, institutions of higher learning have not changed in order to accommodate the needs of teachers. Teachers are not being trained to effectively work with diverse populations (Fullerton, Ruben, McBride, & Bert, 2011; Harrell & Curry, 1987; Harvey et al., 2010; Kavale &

Forness, 2000; Munson, 2001; Nix, 1977; Osborne & Dimattia, 1994; Rojewski & Pollard, 1990; Shanker, 1980; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey, & Simon, 2005; Spencer & Simpson, 2009; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001) and there is a need for change in the way teachers are trained.

A possible solution to the shortcomings of regular education training programs is to merge the special and regular education curriculum into one program that would work to educate hybrid teachers (MacPherson-Court, McDonald, & Sobsey, 2003) who could then work collaboratively in the schools to produce the best outcomes for all students.

#### Statement of the Problem

Classrooms have changed over the years due to changing student variables and legal mandates. Teachers have more responsibilities than ever before yet have not been given adequate training to meet the challenges they face. The NCLB mandate requires that teachers use high quality instruction, yet the same mandate does not give direction to achieve this end. Students are legally mandated to be placed in the least restrictive environment, yet the law does not give directions to achieve appropriate placement. Unfortunately, the courts have been giving the directions. An overhaul of teacher training programs is long overdue. An ideal solution would be a merger of the separate regular and special education teacher training programs into one hybrid program, to train teachers who are competent to work with all students. This paper will address the changing classroom student population, the current state of teacher training programs and the need for change.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Teacher Training for LRE Mainstreaming and Diverse Classrooms

##### **Diverse Classrooms**

Classrooms in the United States have changed over the years because of student, family, and social variables and because of legal mandates resulting in more students with disabilities being placed in the regular education classroom.

**History of change.** The efforts of parents and advocacy groups, in addition to special education case law, have improved educational opportunities for all students, especially those with disabilities (Yell, 2006). The 1954 landmark Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, set a precedent prohibiting segregation in public schools based on race. Eighteen years later another landmark Federal District Court case, *Mills v. Board of Education*, found that since segregation in schools based on race was illegal, so too, it would be unconstitutional to deprive those students with disabilities from receiving an education (Brown, 1954; Mills, 1972; Yell, 2006).

The following year Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed which prohibited federally funded programs from discriminating against persons with disabilities (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). There are currently 13 disability categories (Heward, 2009). Section 504 applies to schools since they are federally funded. Two years later the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed, which is also known as EAHCA, Public Law 94-142, and P.L. 94-142. This Act added more responsibilities to schools including educating students with disabilities in exchange for federal funding, requiring schools to provide an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students receiving services, and educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (EAHCA, 1975).

In 1990 the Individuals with Disabilities Act was passed renaming EAHCA to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). This Act added even more challenges for school districts because it added traumatic brain injury and autism as new disability categories and added a school transition requirement to the IEP for students 16 and older (IDEA, 1990). The 1997 amendments to this Act stated that schools should consider the regular education classroom as the first placement for students with disabilities and those schools should have a continuum of placements from the regular classrooms to institutions (IDEA, 1997; Shippen et al., 2005). Later amendments allowed parents recovery of attorney fees if they prevailed in court cases against school districts; they also extended the age range of students to include 3- to 5-year-olds for protection under the act (Yell, 2006). The 2004 IDEA amendments defined what constitutes a highly qualified special education teacher, prohibited states from requiring that schools use a discrepancy formula for determining eligibility for special education, and instead encouraged schools to use a response to scientifically research based interventions to determine eligibility (IDEA, 2004).

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 schools, districts, and states became accountable for closing the achievement gap and bringing all students up to standards in reading and math. The NCLB Act also required that all students make adequate yearly progress and called for highly qualified teachers (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010; NCLB, 2001; Yell, 2006). Therefore, the NCLB Act increased expectations for all students, including those with disabilities (Harvey et al., 2010; Spencer & Simpson, 2009).

**Classroom statistics.** Over the years there has been an increase in students being served in the schools under IDEA. During the 1980-81 school year approximately 4.1 million students were served and 6.5 million during the 2008-09 school year. As a percentage of the student

population, 10.1 % were served under IDEA during the 1980-81 school year and 13.2 % during the 2008-09 school year. The disability categories with the most students served in 2008-09 were Specific Learning Disabilities (38.2 %), Speech or Language Impairment (22 %), Other Health Impairment, which includes ADHD (10 %), Intellectual Disability (7.4 %), and Emotional Disturbance (6.5 %) (NCES, 2011).

The ethnic makeup of classrooms has changed over the years. As an example, in 1989 the Hispanic population represented 11.3 % of the student population K-12 and in 2009 the percentage had risen to 22.3, almost doubled. In contrast, the number White students decreased from 67.9 % in 1989 to 54.8 % in 2009. During the 2007-08 school year 83.5 % of teachers were White and 6.7 % Hispanic. In 2009 NCES reported that 21% of students aged 5-17 spoke another language besides English at home and 5% of students overall have difficulty speaking English (NCES, 2011). The implications for teachers are that they will have classrooms filled with students with different ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds from their own, which can result in barriers to understanding and ultimately impede learning. They most likely will have English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms with varied native languages.

Between 2000 and 2009 there was a 3.2 % increase for students living in poverty. Between 1980 and 2008 the percentage of single-parent households in the United States changed from 19.5 % to 29.5 %. At the same time the number of births to unmarried women changed from 18.4 % to 40.6 % (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The implication for teachers is that they not only have to address academics in their classrooms but also social issues relating to poverty and family variables. As examples, a teacher could encounter students who can't afford to pay for school-related activities, those who have to work outside of school, or those who are tired in class because they have to take care of siblings while their sole parent works a night shift. Some

teachers may encounter students who are homeless, or wards of the court. Regardless, because of the least restrictive environment mandate, the most likely first placement for all students is the regular education classroom.

### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

The requirement of LRE is that student with disabilities be educated with children without disabilities when appropriate. The specific mandate states that:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and service cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 2004).

The least restrictive environment does not have the same meaning as the terms ‘inclusion’ or ‘mainstreaming’ which refer to actions which put students into the regular education classroom. In contrast, the regular education classroom is one setting that can be considered a least restrictive environment. Therefore, the least restrictive environment is not a certain setting and it is not always the regular education classroom (Yell, 2006). In fact, placement in a more restrictive setting outside of the regular education classroom is sometimes more appropriate as was the conclusion of the Supreme Court case, *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley* (Rowley, 1982). The court recognized that the regular education classroom simply is not a suitable setting for many students with disabilities.

So, the act does provide for students being educated outside of the regular education classroom or institutional settings. Placing a student who needs a separate placement in the regular education classroom may be denying that student’s right to a least restrictive environment and ultimately could be more restricting (Nix, 1977). Skinner (1996) agreed that it is necessary to have more options than just the regular education setting which could be

potentially detrimental for those students with disabilities who need a more restrictive setting. Schools and teachers need to know that even though the least restrictive environment is usually associated with the most integrated and common setting (i.e., the regular education classroom) that setting is not always the best choice for all students (Taylor, 2004).

IDEA requires school districts to have a continuum of alternative placement options. This continuum of placements includes the regular education classroom, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions. However, the regular education classroom should be the setting of choice if possible (IDEA, 2004). Sometimes students are put in the regular education classroom out of fear of lawsuits simply because the school doesn't understand the meaning of least restrictive environment (Shanker, 1980). For this reason regular education teachers need to have knowledge of all 13 disability categories, nuances within each disability area, and competency teaching students with disabilities; a job that was usually left to special education teachers.

### **Disability Categories and Implications**

Because the first educational placement that should be considered for students with disabilities is the regular education classroom, teachers could potentially be called upon to work with students in all 13 disability categories which include (IDEA, 2007):

- Autism – a developmental disability that affects communication and social interaction.
- Deaf-Blindness – a combination of visual and hearing impairments such that students cannot be accommodated in separate programs specifically for either children with deafness or blindness.
- Deafness – severe hearing impairment that prohibits language processing through hearing, with or without amplification.

- Emotional Disturbance – having an inability to learn that is not explained by other factors, inability to maintain satisfactory relationships, inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears in relation to school or personal problems to a marked degree over a long period of time. This category does include Schizophrenia.
- Hearing Impairment – impaired hearing that adversely affects educational performance but is not included under the category of Deafness.
- Intellectual Disabilities – significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing with deficits in adaptive behavior.
- Multiple Disabilities – the combination of concomitant impairments which causes such severe needs that student can't be accommodated in a separate program for one of the impairments.
- Orthopedic Impairments – adversely affect educational performance and include congenital anomaly, impairments from diseases such as tuberculosis, and from other causes such as cerebral palsy, amputations, fractures, and burns.
- Other Health Impairment – having limited strength, vitality, or alertness that limits alertness to the educational environment. Can be due to chronic problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorders, diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, Tourette Syndrome, cancer, and other disorders.
- Specific Learning Disability – disorder in one or more basic processes involved in using spoken or written language. Can include perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

- Speech or Language Impairment – communication disorders including stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment which adversely affect educational performance.
- Traumatic Brain Injury – acquired brain injury caused by external force that results in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both.
- Visual Impairment – impairment that even with correction adversely affects educational performance. Includes both partial sight and blindness.

Each of these categories includes a range of disability; therefore, students within these categories will present in the classroom with unique needs. As examples, the implications for teaching students with Autism, Other Health Impairment, and Emotional Disturbance will be discussed.

**Autism.** Students with Autism can display extremes of cognitive functioning from severe intellectual deficits to high intellectual abilities. For this reason it is considered to be a spectrum of disorders and is known as Autism Spectrum Disorders. Some students with Autism can speak and some cannot. Characteristic of all is the need for routine and sameness; change causes problems. Social deficits are common for students with Autism and they will get more social practice in the regular education classroom (Biklen, 1982). Common behaviors associated with Autism include perseveration, physical and verbal aggression, stereotypy, impulsivity, and self-stimulation (Spencer & Simpson, 2009). When working with students in the Autism category, teachers will need to know how to handle behavioral as well as academic issues.

**Other Health Impairment.** A student with cancer would be served under this category. Interventions for students with cancer must be individualized because each child will be affected differently with both academics and with medical treatment. It is best for students with cancer to

continue schooling as usual if possible because it gives the student hope and provides more stability. What the teacher needs to consider is the type of cancer, how the treatment could affect school work, what the side effects and complications might be from treatment, chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. Children with special health care needs have an increased risk for health emergencies in the classroom so a teacher might have to deal with illness and anticipate medical emergencies (Deasey-Spinetta & Tarr, 1985).

**Emotional Disturbance.** These students can have externalizing or internalizing behaviors which manifest differently in the classroom (Heward, 2009). Successfully integrating severely emotionally disturbed children into a less restrictive setting may involve modifying the attitudes of the other students in the classroom (Newman & Simpson, 1983). The teacher will have to have individualized interventions for each student. Considering that there is a strong correlation between behavior problems and low academic achievement, the teacher will need to incorporate both behavioral and academic interventions (Heward, 2009).

### **Current Teacher Training Programs**

Even though student populations have changed over the years to include more students with disabilities and more students with ethnic and cultural backgrounds different from their teachers, the teacher training programs at institutions of higher learning have not changed. Teachers have more responsibilities and legal demands than their predecessors from previous years, yet they are receiving the same preparation. A related problem to the lack of teacher training is an increase in referrals to special education. Because of their lack of knowledge about how to teach students with disabilities, regular education teachers refer too many students to special education. A study by Valenzuela, Copeland, Huaqing Qi, and Park (2006) found that minority students and English language learners were disproportionately placed in special



education and more segregated settings. This restricts their access to the general education environment and is especially a concern for English Language Learners as it takes away opportunities to interact with peers who are potential language models (Valenzuela et al., 2006). With proper training so that teachers become experienced teaching students of varying abilities, the referrals should decline (Idol, 2006).

**Teacher responsibilities.** Teachers are expected to work with a wide range of students from gifted to those with special needs (Van Reusen, et al., 2001). A purpose of the LRE mandate is to increase social interaction between students with and without disabilities, therefore regular education teachers need to be competent in teaching social skills (Osborne & Dimattia, 1994; Spencer & Simpson, 2009). Teachers have to follow recommendations in their students' IEPs. They are supposed to be quality teachers who monitor their students to ensure they are making progress. Teachers need to be competent with classroom management and problem solving strategies for dealing with a diverse array of students and behaviors (Rosenfield & Rubinson, 1985). It's possible that teachers will also need to be skilled at crisis intervention, school health emergencies, and administering first aid (Barrett, 2001; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Additionally, a major principle of the NCLB mandate is that instruction should be based on sound scientific research (NCLB, 2001; Yell, 2006). Complying with this principle adds to the workload (i.e., when do teachers have time to purview research?). Finally, teachers have to take time to interact with parents, other teachers, and staff.

**Research.** Harvey et al. (2010) surveyed a national sample of faculty members who were part of special education and regular education programs at institutions of higher learning. Part of the focus of this study was to determine efforts used to prepare preservice teachers for including students with disabilities in their classrooms. The results showed that approximately

35% of training programs had an introductory course on the exceptional child and special education; 26% had a class about inclusion and inclusive classrooms; 12% had a course on curriculum methods and instruction; 10% had a course on collaboration; 9% had a course on diverse learners; 3% had a course on assessment and planning; 3% had a class covering classroom management; and, 2% of training programs had a course that covered interventions.

Although the sample size was small (N=124) the results of this exploratory study do show that training for preservice teachers is inadequate considering that 65% of the sample didn't have an introductory class for exceptional learners, 91% did not have training for teaching diverse learners, 97% did not have training for classroom management, and 98% offered teacher training programs that did not include learning about using interventions.

A pilot study completed in Minnesota in 2011 confirmed the results of the Harvey et al. (2010) study. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether teacher training programs in Minnesota higher education institutions have reformed to meet the needs of current or future regular education teachers. The researchers sought to identify the course offerings in programs that offer degrees for teaching in K-12 schools. There are 28 institutions of higher learning in Minnesota that offer 4-year teacher training programs and all offer a website that details areas of study and course requirements. Course descriptions are available for all required courses. Therefore, for this pilot study, online resources were used to determine the course content required for teaching degrees in Minnesota. Results showed that 61% of the training programs offer one course related to inclusive classrooms, 47% offer a 2-credit introductory-type class, 29% offer one 3-credit class, 24% offer one 4-credit class, and 39% of the training programs do not offer any special-needs related classes (see Table 1, Callanan et al., 2011). One class cannot possibly cover the course material needed to acquire the needed skills for working with students

with disabilities and diverse classrooms. Therefore, it is apparent that teacher training programs in Minnesota have not adequately reformed to meet the needs of current or future teaching issues faced by regular education teachers (Callanan, Houlihan, & Decker, unpublished manuscript). More research assessing training programs across states is needed to validate existing research. This information can be used to push the movement for changing existing programs.

### **Need for Change**

Several authors have suggested that there is a need for more collaboration between regular and special education programs (Fullerton et al., 2011; Putnam et al., 1995; Quigney, 1998; Shippen et al., 2005). Harvey et al. (2010) suggest that collaboration between regular and special education programs is critical and should begin with the teacher training programs. Nix (1977) shares that there needs to be a massive effort to alter preservice programs and there should be additional education for existing teachers whose roles have changed. The results of the Harvey (2010) and Callanan et al. (unpublished) studies show that teacher training programs have not reformed to meet the needs of teachers. Change in the way teachers are prepared to teach in today's classrooms is long overdue. When considering changing the training programs, institutions need to consider exactly what teachers need to know when they enter the classrooms and they need ongoing training throughout their careers.

Teacher training programs should be developed based on research on the key variables that are successful to inclusion in the regular education classroom according to Stanovich and Jordan (2003). These variables include diversity, working with a wide range of student abilities, being able to adapt and modify curriculum and instruction, teacher beliefs about including students with disabilities in their classrooms, teachers' sense of efficacy, and their repertoire of teaching behaviors.

**Training objectives.** Teachers need to understand the nature of disabilities and the impact they have on learning. Teachers need to be knowledgeable and skilled with using evidence-based classroom interventions to manage the diverse classroom environment and improve academic behavior. They not only need to learn how to search for effective interventions, but teachers also must know how to implement them with integrity, monitor the data, and alter the interventions to achieve the best outcomes. According to Rosenfield (1995) teachers don't widely accept research on instruction and use trial and error, personal experience, and what they remember from their preservice training.

Teachers need to find behavioral solutions for classroom issues instead of solely relying on special education programming. Students with behavioral disorders bring some of the biggest challenges to the regular education classroom when it comes to assuring education in the least restrictive environment while preserving the students' rights (Sabourin, Ward, & Erchul, 2006). Zero tolerance policies have been used by schools for behavior problems but have not worked (Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Sabourin et al., Skiba & Peterson, 1999). With training in behavior and classroom management, teachers could be a better solution. They need to learn effective high quality teaching strategies for working with diverse student populations. Teachers need to be skilled in teaching students who have a wide array of needs from gifted to special. Teachers need to learn social skills not only for teaching students with social needs, but for them to use for interacting with parents, staff, and other professionals. Teachers need to be skilled at crisis intervention and administering first aid (Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Having good collaboration skills is necessary for working with parents, staff, and other professionals. In other words, teachers need skills and knowledge that cannot be imparted with one related course, an introductory course, or worse, no related courses in their training programs.

**Short term solution.** Considering that an overhaul of teacher training programs will be a time-intensive endeavor, teachers and schools need to find immediate solutions for their teaching needs. If school districts are too small to meet the needs of all students, they could join other smaller districts to share resources (Deasy-Spinetta & Tarr, 1985).

Other strategies that can help teachers include team teaching which involves several teachers collaborating for problem-solving, and peer tutoring which involves students helping their peers (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Once students are integrated into their classrooms, teachers need to be able to monitor progress frequently to make sure the student is making progress. Teachers need to learn data collection strategies for decision-making (Shinn & Habedank, 1993).

Learning to use response to intervention (RtI) strategies for academic concerns in context with schoolwide positive behavior support (SW-PBS) systems for behavior concerns will help improve the academic and behavioral issues schoolwide which will help teachers in their individual classrooms. A RtI model uses a student's lack of response to an evidence-based intervention that has been implemented with integrity as the basis for intensifying, modifying, or changing an intervention (Gresham, 2004). It is not a hit-or-miss approach and will help teachers zero in on areas of need. SW-PBS systems use data-based decision-making and evidence-based practices within a schoolwide support system. Reducing disruptive behavior will help improve academic outcomes (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Overall, teachers need to take advantage of consultation services with auxiliary personnel as much as possible; especially school psychologists who can help implement interventions and check for intervention integrity to make sure they are implemented properly (Rosenfield & Rubinson (1985).

## CHAPTER III

### SUMMARY

Over the years parents, advocacy groups and special education law have changed the face of the regular education classroom. Landmark court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (Brown, 1954) gave all persons with disabilities more rights including the right to an education. The passage of IDEA and amendments (IDEA, 1990; IDEA, 1997; & IDEA, 2004) gave students with disabilities more rights within the school including a right to be educated in the least restrictive environment. This allowed for more interaction with peers in a more normal setting. Therefore, these laws have allowed more students with disabilities to be educated in the regular classroom, at least as a beginning setting. If a student is removed from the regular education classroom to a more restrictive setting, the burden of proof for the change is on the school (Shanker, 1980) therefore, schools are more likely to leave a student in the regular education classroom without clear proof that a move is more beneficial. Therefore, all regular education teachers can anticipate having students from potentially all 13 disability categories in their classrooms.

In addition, the passage of NCLB in response to low academic achievement added further responsibilities for teachers with added accountability. In addition, student variables have also changed over the years with more students living in poverty, having a native language other than English, and coming from single-parent homes (NCES, 2011). Teachers at times will have to take on the role of a social worker.

Unfortunately, teacher training programs in institutions of higher learning have not changed to keep up with the needs of teachers (Fullerton et al., 2011). There has been a call for collaboration between the separate regular and special education programs (Fullerton et al., 2011; Putnam et al., 1995; Quigney, 1998; Shippen et al., 2005). The need for a massive

alteration of preservice programs in addition to having more education for existing teachers was shared by Nix (1977). Exploratory and pilot studies (Callanan et al., unpublished; Harvey et al., 2010) showed a lack of needed training in most schools with virtually no related training in some.

When revising programs, training program leaders need to take into account what teachers need to know. This would include imparting knowledge and skills for working with diverse populations, especially those students with disabilities. Teachers need to be skilled to work with behavioral problems and social problems in addition to having good collaborative skills for working with parents, colleagues, and other professional staff. Overall, teachers need a repertoire of skills and knowledge that they can't find in traditional teacher training programs.

A massive overhaul of teacher training programs would be the ideal, but unfortunately it will be a major, time-intensive project. Meanwhile, teachers and schools need more immediate solutions. These solutions could include sharing resources with other districts (Deasy-Spinetta & Tarr, 1985), using team-teaching and peer-tutoring (Van Reusen, et al., 2001), response to intervention, and schoolwide positive behavior support systems. Teachers need to use available auxiliary consultation services, especially school psychologists, to find solutions for academic and behavior concerns in their classrooms. The day may come when regular education and special education training programs are overhauled and merged into one hybrid program capable of training teachers who can effectively teach all students. Until that time, teachers and schools are obligated to follow legal mandates placed upon schools, especially the least restrictive environment mandate, and work to give all students an appropriate education with good outcomes.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Continuation of the practice of offering separate training programs for regular and special education at institutions of higher learning is antithetical to the requirements of the legal mandates which require a continuum of services starting in the regular education classroom. All teachers should have the skills and knowledge to work with all students, including those with disabilities. The teacher training programs do need to be revised so that graduating teachers have the skills and knowledge to work with all students. Efforts should be made between regular education and special education departments to achieve this. However, combining these two programs which have been separate for decades into one hybrid program will take time and most likely will take root with additional research showing the lack of training nationwide.

Research should continue not only for the sake of demonstrating the lack of appropriate teacher training in current programs, but also to verify the program components that teachers will need to be successful in teaching students with varied abilities and backgrounds. In the past parents and advocacy groups rallied to gain rights for students with disabilities and ultimately changed the face of education through their efforts and resultant case law. It may be such that teachers, schools, and their advocacy groups will need to do the same to initiate change that is long overdue in teacher training programs in institutions of higher learning. Training program changes should have coincided with changes placed on teachers and school districts over the past 50 years but that did not happen. It is now time for change so that the laws and mandates passed to improve the outcomes of all students can be fulfilled by competent, trained teachers.



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Appendix: Regular Education Teacher Training Programs Offering Courses for Today's Diverse Classrooms

SCHOOL	0 Classes	1 Class	2 Classes	3 Classes	Credits	Course Title & Number
Augsburg		X			4	EDC410: The Special Needs Learner
Bemidji State	X					
Bethany		X			3	EDUC370: Introduction to the Exceptional Learner
Bethel		X			3	EDUC408: Teaching Diverse Learners
Carleton	X					
Concordia, Moorhead		X			2	EDUC425: Education of the Exceptional Child
Concordia, St. Paul		X			2	ED439: The Inclusive Classroom
Crown College		X			2	EDU330: Introduction to the Exceptional Learner
Gustavus		X			3	EDU389: Inclusive Classrooms
Hamline		X			2	EDU5720: Exceptionality
Martin Luther	X					
Metropolitan	X					
MSU, Mankato		X			3	EEC424: Special Education & Behavioral Needs in Elementary Education
MSU, Moorhead		X			3	SPED320: Educational Services for Individuals with Exceptionalities
North Central		X			2	EDUC366: Creating the Inclusive Classroom
St. Ben's/St. John's		X			4	203: Human Development Typical & Exceptional
St. Catherine	X					
St. Cloud		X			2	SPED425: Teaching K-12 Learners with Special Needs
St. Mary's	X					
St. Olaf		X			4	EDU375: Differential instruction for Exceptional Learners
St. Scholastica		X			2	EDU3250: Special Education & Inclusion
St. Thomas	X					
Southwest State	X					
U of M, Crookston	X					
U of M, Duluth		X			4	SPED4310: Adaptation for Diverse Learners
U of M, Morris	X					
U of M, Twin Cities		X			2	EDHD5004: Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings
Winona	X					