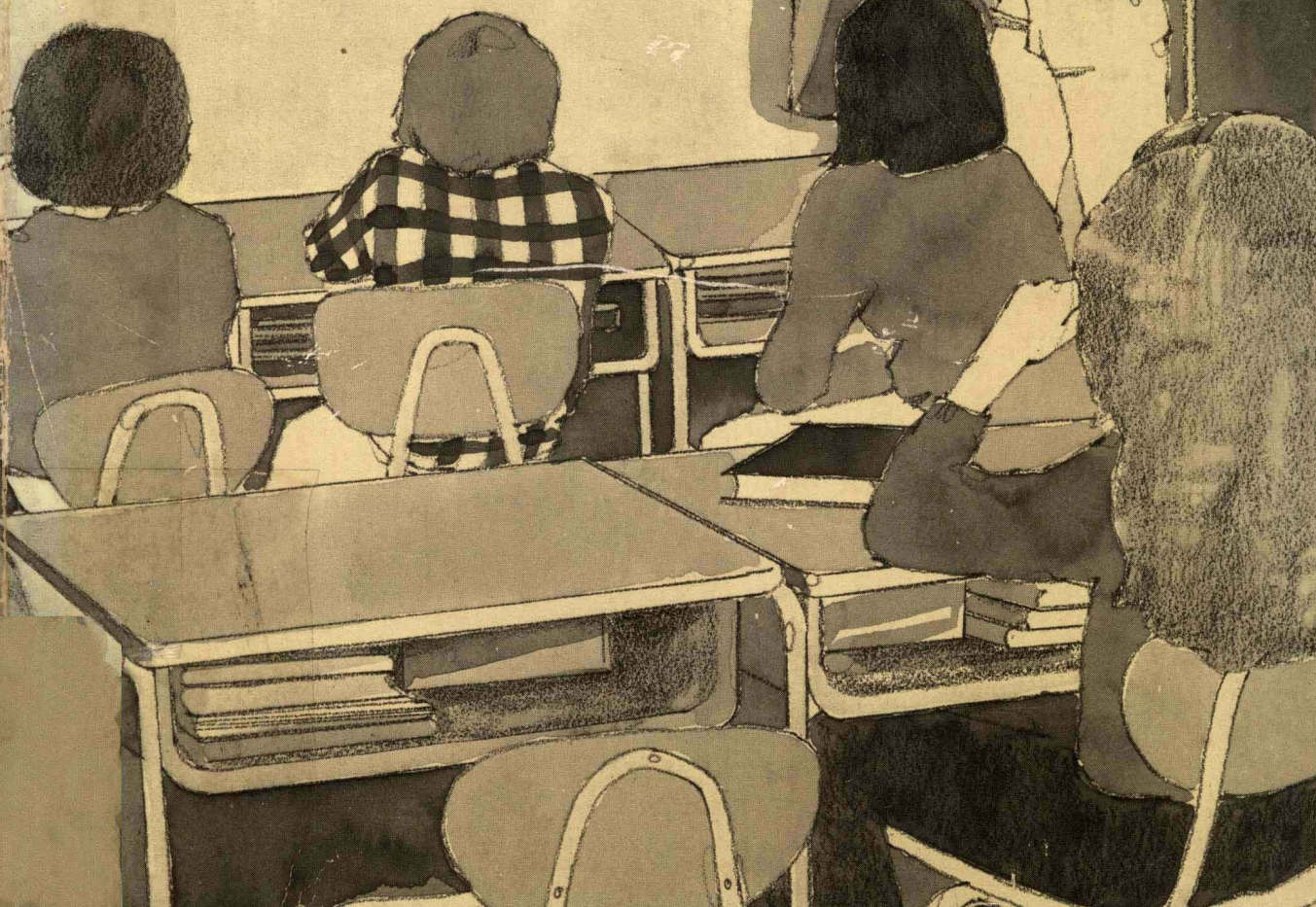


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Teaching Handicapped Students in the Mainstream

Second Edition

Pasanella • Volkmer



**Teaching Handicapped Students
in the Mainstream:
Coming Back or Never Leaving**

Second Edition

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Preface

Since 1977, when the first edition of our text *Coming Back . . . or Never Leaving* (now entitled *Teaching Handicapped Students in the Mainstream*) was published, we have continued to work closely with groups of educators, both at home and abroad, whose commitment to quality programming for the handicapped we share. Among our favorite memories of these encounters is the occasion when we were introduced as the authors of *Mainstreaming: Getting There or Never Coming Back!*

In the past few years a tremendous amount of creativity and energy has gone into "getting there"—getting closer to the point where all handicapped students will have access to a quality education in our public schools and to the time when their right to such an opportunity is no longer questioned. And so, we are "coming back" to our readers with an expanded, updated and practical book on the "whys" and the "hows" of educating handicapped students in the mainstream.

The focus of this book is instructional programming for mildly and moderately handicapped students in regular classrooms. We are not talking about severely handicapped children whose problems are so obvious and so profound that they are unable to enter the mainstream when they begin school, though many of the techniques in this book are very effective with this group also. Rather, we are looking at two other populations of children:

1. those students who have been removed from regular programs and placed in special education because they are slow learners, have IQs below average, have not learned the basic skills, or are behavior problems; and
2. those students who are in the mainstream but who are potential candidates for special services.

We do not believe in a categorical approach to educating handicapped students; therefore, this book is not organized around the traditional categories. We do present some special tips for teachers which are unique to various handicapping conditions, but we feel that the educational approaches and instructional techniques described in this text are applicable to a wide range of learners.

It is our belief that a new future is emerging for the handicapped in our society and that the "know-how" to bring that future closer to today exists. We believe that to make the technology work, to change the lives of handicapped students, two critical components are necessary: a fair and systematic process for making educational decisions and a coordinated team approach to implementing such a process. Our book attempts to present both components of this process. We believe in the right of all mildly handicapped learners to be educated to the maximum of their ability.

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Contents

Preface v

Acknowledgments vi

1 Mainstreaming—A Social Issue 1

What the law intends concerning placement; toward a definition; a historical overview; service delivery strategies; mainstreaming and the dynamics of change; where do we go from here?

2 Getting It All Together: Process Steps and Techniques for IEP Teams 33

Model for educational decision making—an overview; shared responsibilities within the process

3 Identification and Referral 51

Characteristics of high risk learners; screening for identification; alternatives to formal referral; referral procedures

4 Assessment—Part One 91

Observation; assessment checklist: classroom environment, curriculum, methods, and materials; interviewing; school records; testing

5 Assessment—Part Two 133

Planning assessment—a systems approach; reporting assessment outcomes

6 Designing the IEP 161

Purpose and intent of the IEP; the IEP team; IEP components; the placement recommendation; the IEP form; some common concerns; the letter vs. the spirit of the law

7 Implementing the IEP 181

Understanding the handicapped: planning for social and instructional integration; hearing handicapped; visually handicapped; learning handicapped; physically handicapped; preparing classmates; the individual implementation plan; some

principles of good instruction; behavior management; teaching subject matter areas; evaluating student progress in the classroom; evaluating the IEP

8 Making It All Work: Skills for Educational Decision-Makers 241

School administrators; the role of the resource teacher; the regular classroom teacher; parents as team members—what they should know

9 Making It All Work: Inservice Training, Service Delivery, and Program Evaluation 287

Inservice training; planning a full service delivery system; evaluation of the instructional program; program review model

Index 339

1

Mainstreaming—A Social Issue

Mainstreaming in the past, as well as today, cannot be seen as an educational problem or issue. It has always reflected the nature of the larger society, if only because deviancy or handicap are consequence of societal norms. (Sarason & Doris, 1979, p. 373)

In order to appreciate the impetus for, and the implications of, that educational innovation of the 1960s and 1970s which we call *mainstreaming*, it is necessary to view it within the context of social change. This period in educational history may well go down as the "Years of the Laws" (Keogh & Levitt, 1976). The highlights included the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and then the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This act (P.L. 89-10) came as a clear federal directive to attend to the inadequacies of an educational system in which significant numbers of children were not getting the compensatory help needed to offset the effects of "educational deprivation." Funds were authorized for programs to meet the special needs of such children; subsequent amendments to the act strengthened the federal effort to bring about improvement in the nation's schools. Finally, heralded by a series of far-reaching court decisions and new legislation in some states, came P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. These laws forced society as a whole to confront the issue of individual rights

and protections for the handicapped and other minority groups. Special education, therefore, became a target for change. The segregated nature of the majority of special education programming was called into question, and *mainstreaming* emerged as the watchword of a new era, characterized by decentralization of many of the large institutions for the handicapped, a movement toward "barrier-free" design, and a proliferation of programs offering alternatives to full-time placement in the special day school or classroom.

The new, and already implemented educational policies and procedures related to delivering appropriate services to handicapped students represent the positive impact of recent legislation and litigation. However, there remains a challenge for the 1980s and the years ahead: moving beyond compliance with the minimal standards set by law while pursuing quality programming for all the children, youth, and families we serve. It is our belief that a commitment to quality programming for the handicapped develops out of

1. A clear understanding of the intent of P.L. 94-142 and the climate which created it;
2. A perspective on what is being tried and its effectiveness;
3. An awareness of the dynamics of change.

The remainder of this chapter attempts to provide such understanding, perspective, and awareness with regard to the instruction of handicapped children in the context of the educational mainstream.

WHAT THE LAW INTENDS CONCERNING PLACEMENT

... procedures to 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 educational 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 ... (Public Law 94-142, 20 U.S.C. 1412 [5] [B])

Unless a handicapped child's individualized education program requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school which he or she would attend if not handicapped. (45 CFR, Sec. 121 a. 552)

The preceding quotations, from the law and federal regulations governing the implementation of P.L. 94-142, spell out the meaning of the “least restrictive environment” placement mandate of the law. Similar language now appears in state law and education codes. As Gilhool so forcefully states:

It is a new language that suggests a new conception of the handicapped citizen, a new conception of that citizen's place in our society, a new conception of those obligations owed to him by those who act in place of the society . . . It is now a question of justice. (1976, p. 21)

It is important to note at the outset that the word *mainstreaming* does not appear in P.L. 94-142, nor in the federal regulations governing the implementation of that law. In the words of Keogh and Levitt, “Mainstreaming refers to instruction of pupils within the regular education setting” (1976, p. 2). P.L. 94-142 is not a mainstreaming law. It does not mandate placement of handicapped pupils into regular classes. It does, however, mandate that whenever a student is placed in an educational setting other than the regular program, the proximity of that setting to the student's regular school and to nonhandicapped peers be considered. The law further calls upon educational agencies to make available a continuum of alternative placements to meet the special needs of handicapped students. Figure 1, an adaptation of Deno's “cascade model” (1970), is a graphic representation of such a continuum. It illustrates the meaning of the P.L. 94-142 concept of *least restrictive environment*—a concept originally applied to the institutionalized mentally retarded—which is now seen as having applicability to all persons classified as having exceptional needs. Stemming from the principle of a person's fundamental liberty, *least restrictive environment*, when applied to education, “means that among all alternatives for placement within a general education system, handicapped children should be placed where they can obtain the best education at the least distance away from mainstream society” (Molloy, 1974, p. 5). Such a system is designed to make available a full range of special educational services and environments which are appropriate for individual students at a given time. For students who require special placement, the goal is integration or reentry into the mainstream. “The concept is that there is one system of public education for *all* children, not one for the handicapped and another for everyone else” (Abeson, Burgdorf, Casey, Kunz, & McNeil, 1975). Such an approach to educational programming means that the majority of handicapped students (those with the least amount of learning handicap) will be

served in regular classrooms where their program can be modified or supplemented to meet their individual needs. Students whose handicapping conditions are severe (a much smaller percentage of the handicapped population) will receive educational and support services in a protective setting—a special class, a hospital, or an institution. The cascade diagram also conveys that the appropriateness of any special education placement should be continuously evaluated with reference to the student's changing needs and that students should be returned to, or placed close to, the regular classroom when they acquire the social and academic competencies to function in less restrictive settings.

While the requirement of *least restrictive environment*, or *placement alternative*, applies to all students, regardless of the degree or complexity of their handicapping condition, our focus throughout this book is primarily on the delivery of special education services to handicapped students who now participate on a full-time or part-time basis in regular classrooms. These students comprise that segment of the school population traditionally identified as *mildly handicapped*—the educable mentally retarded, educationally handi-

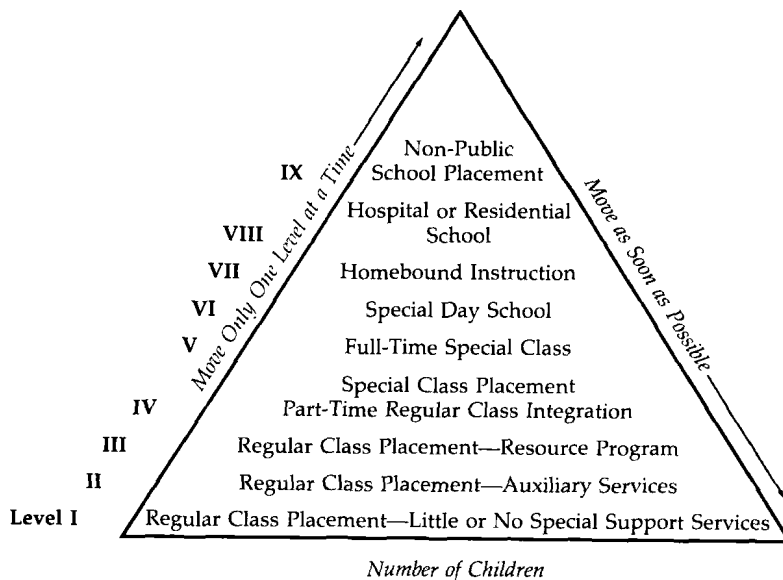


Figure 1 Continuum of Instructional Arrangements Available To Public School Handicapped Children

capped, or learning disabled. They are the students who, in the past, were typically referred out of regular education and placed in special classes "because of some sort of teacher perceived behavioral or learning problem" (Lilly, 1970, p. 37). Now, based on the placement principle of least restrictive environment, these kinds of learners, and others with mild to moderate physical or sensory deficits, are returning to, or remaining in, the mainstream and are receiving needed special education services as a supplement to their regular class program. The content of this book, then, concerns meeting the needs of all handicapped students who can benefit from regular classroom placement for all or most of their school day, when they and/or their teachers receive specialized instruction, services, or support as necessary. With this perspective in mind, we turn now to a consideration of *mainstreaming*—the popularized, though imprecise, term for placement in the least restrictive environment.

MAINSTREAMING—TOWARD A DEFINITION

MacMillan and Semmel (1977) point out that although no consensus definition of mainstreaming appears to have been reached by educators, most of the definitions offered fall into one of two categories: "(1) those which merely state something about desegregation and/or delabeling; and (2) those which feature some steps in which a child is assisted while in the regular education program" (p. 3). Definitions of the first type include Beery's (1972) observation that mainstreaming implies a continuum of programs, including reduction of programs which "pull" a student *out* of the mainstream and "Educational Specialists" who work much of the time in the regular classroom. Birch also speaks to desegregation in his 1974 definition of mainstreaming as an "amalgamation of regular and special education into one system to provide a spectrum of services for all children according to their learning needs" (1974, p.iii).

Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard, and Kukic (1975) state that definitions such as those of Beery and Birch are elusive and that a more concise definition encompassing the many complexities of mainstreaming is necessary. These authors point out that

. . . definitions and comments pertaining to mainstreaming which appear in the literature have focused more on administrative considerations (e.g., the amount of time spent in regular classrooms) than on instructional variables (e.g., the instructional activities in

which the child should participate when he attends the regular class). Quite possibly, the emphasis on administrative concerns reflects the prevailing view among researchers and practitioners that mainstreaming is primarily an administrative arrangement and is only secondarily, if at all, an instructional approach. (p. 4).

Accordingly, Kaufman et al. define the structure of mainstreaming as encompassing three major components: (a) integration, (b) educational planning and programming, and (c) clarification of responsibility. *Integration*, as used in this definition, includes three interdependent elements—*temporal integration*, meaning time spent in the regular classroom; *instructional integration*, or sharing in the instructional environment of that class; and *social integration* and acceptance by classmates. The educational planning and programming component of mainstreaming is the ongoing cycle of assessment, instructional planning, and evaluating processes. Mainstreaming also involves articulated planning and programming by both regular and special educators at all levels of the system, and thus clarification and assignment of responsibilities is the third component.

Note that these three components of mainstreaming are interactive. *Integration*, while critical, is not synonymous with *mainstreaming*,



which, in the words of Kaufman et al., “represents one of the most complex educational service innovations undertaken to date by the educational system” (p. 11).

In a cautionary article proposing guidelines for mainstreaming the mildly retarded, MacMillan, Jones, and Meyers argue for the addition of the following elements to the Kaufman et al. definition:

1. The children being mainstreamed must be enrolled in a regular class or program roster and spend half or more of their time with that regular class or program.
2. The regular class teacher or teachers, regardless of any shared responsibility with other professionals for programming for the child, must be primarily, if not exclusively, accountable for the child's progress.
3. No categorical labels or classifications can be applied to any child to whom mainstreaming is applied; this is so for such formerly labeled but decertified EMR or other once segregated children as well as for those never previously labeled or segregated.
4. Mainstreaming is delimited to the educational strategies which can be applied in normalized educational service for children with learning handicaps where the handicaps are not so severe as to preclude the identification for and placement with a regular class or program. (1976, p. 3)

This final constraint on the use of the term mainstreaming succinctly distinguishes mainstreaming as a specific application, versus the total meaning, of the principle of least restrictive environment.

As will be noted in a later section of this chapter, lack of a precise, functional, and generally accepted definition of mainstreaming has hampered efforts to evaluate the outcome of the mainstreaming movement.

MAINSTREAMING—A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Factors providing impetus to the mainstreaming approach to special education service delivery may be categorized as (a) the determination of professional educators, (b) court decisions, and (c) governmental policies. For an in-depth review of these factors and a greater

historical perspective, the publications by Deno (1970), Gottlieb (1980), Hobbs (1975), Kaufman et al. (1975), Kirp, Buss, and Kuriloff (1974), Lilly (1970, 1971), Meyers, MacMillan, and Yoshida (1975), and Weintraub, Abeson, Ballard, and La Vor (1976) are helpful.

Influence of Professional Educators

Criticism and concern about special education services are expressed in the literature as far back as the 1960s. Johnson's article (1962) questions the validity of segregated classes for educable mentally retarded students. Dunn's celebrated article (1968) may be seen as a turning point for special educators. He prefaces this article as follows:

In my view, much of our past and present practices are morally and educationally wrong. . . . Let us stop being pressured into continuing and expanding a special education program that we know now to be undesirable for many of the children we are dedicated to serve. (p. 5)

Lilly (1970, 1971) extended Dunn's view. Motivated by his review of the current efficacy studies which he found to yield inconclusive and conflicting evidence concerning special programs, he recommended drastic changes to the special education delivery system. Solutions viable in the past were now seen by many critics as creating problems, and the forces of change began to move. Deno (1970) challenged special educators to face the issue of "whether they are justified in continuing to try to fix up the children that an inadequate instructional program has maimed so they will fit better into a system that should be adjusting itself to the learning needs of the children" (p. 231). She stated a belief that the special education system could serve as "developmental capital" in a major effort to upgrade all of public education. Her words are strong.

It is suggested that the special education system abandon its long standing assumption that its success can be judged by how many more children are enrolled in special education programs this year than were enrolled last year or 10 years ago. We suggest judgment by criteria which indicate: (a) to what extent special education is serving those children who cannot reasonably be accommodated in a good regular education program and (b) how the children it serves are progressing toward socially relevant goals. We suggest that special education resources be mobilized to serve as an experimental cutting edge to help education move itself along the path toward truly individualized or personalized instruction so that chil-

dren who are different can be increasingly accommodated in a hospitable educational mainstream. (p. 236)

In an extremely comprehensive review of the literature on the efficacy of special class placement, Meyers et al. (1975) raise the question of failure to control for the teacher variable as a serious problem in the reported attempts to evaluate special classes. These authors take the position that "any particular low-IQ child placed with the 'right' teacher, regardless of the administrative arrangement, (special class, regular class) is likely to benefit," going on to add, "unfortunately the reverse is just as true" (p. 9).

The concern for the children who were being inappropriately and inadequately served in special classes brought with it a recognition that a worthwhile goal for special educators might be to enable regular teachers, through support and training, to become more self-sufficient in managing the instructional programs of the mildly handicapped. This is the philosophy underlying the previously cited concept of a "continuum" or "cascade" of educational alternatives.

Closely related to the "cascade" system which addresses the needs of the total range of exceptional individuals is Lilly's (1971) "zero reject" model, which places the responsibility for failure to educate the *mildly* handicapped on the teacher rather than on the taught. *Zero reject* means "that once a child is enrolled in a regular education program within a school, it must be impossible to administratively separate him from that program for any reason" (Lilly, 1971, p. 745). Problems must be dealt with by those most directly involved, and not referred to separate and isolated programs for treatment, though such services may still be the most appropriate for the severely handicapped.

The "Fail-Save" model, developed by Van Etten and Adamson (1973), focuses on how to keep a child with special needs from being held in a service plan that is ineffective and also provides an operational basis for Deno's (1970) "cascade" system. This model has four phases, beginning with consultant services to the regular classroom teacher and progressing to full-time special class or day school placement. The "Fail-Save" model limits the amount of time that a child can spend in any program phase, thus forcing program accountability and ensuring that individual students have every available opportunity to demonstrate success in the mainstream. A student cannot be moved away from the mainstream more than one phase at a time. With parents playing a vital role, placement decisions are made by a group of professionals who know the child. Success of

the model depends more on the skill and dedication of trained personnel than on administrative design.

The necessity for collaboration between regular and special education service providers continues to be viewed as critical to effective programming for the mildly handicapped:

In order to achieve success in school, many exceptional pupils need specialized, ongoing help as a supplement to regular instruction. Where the primary educational program for exceptional pupils is carried out within the mainstream, these specialized services must be available and functional in regular classes. In our opinion it is both reasonable and possible that these important supplemental services can be provided within the context of regular class instruction. It should be emphasized, however, that such services are often expensive and require coordination and cooperation of a number of professionals and paraprofessionals within the educational system. (Keogh & Levitt, 1976, p. 10)

Court Decisions

Until very recently, the law offered parents of handicapped children relatively little assistance in resolving their most pressing educational problems. In increasing numbers, however, handicapped citizens and their parents have turned to the courts to secure their rights, to secure that which is due them under the law (Gilhool, 1976, McClung, 1975). Lawyers have assumed a very active role in disputes over the adequacy of educational programs for the handicapped. The essence of the movement, which began over 2 decades ago with civil rights activists, is a concern for individual rights in general. Resulting litigation has had a profound effect on educational goals and policy and is beginning to have a dramatic, practical effect on the lives of handicapped children and their parents. The problem areas most frequently addressed by the courts have been (a) exclusion of handicapped children from the public schools, (b) misclassification (labeling), and (c) inappropriate programming. While cases centering around the problem of exclusion from public education programs are less relevant to the present discussion of mainstreaming for the mildly handicapped than those cases dealing with misclassification and inappropriate programming, two such landmark cases will be included in the following brief account of recent litigation, since these cases demonstrate the impact which court decisions have had on the public school system.

The legal bases for the litigation involving the rights of handicapped children are the equal protection and due process clauses of