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ABSTRACT

Presented in a question and answer format, the paper examines ways to provide resource services to handicapped children within the regular preschool or kindergarten class. Benefits (such as the presence of appropriate role models and increased acceptance of individual differences) of resource services in the regular classroom for both the special needs child and the normal child are noted. Potential problems and their suggested solutions include: (1) lack of knowledge by regular and resource personnel (provide training and practice); (2) conflict between resource and regular personnel (encourage better communication); (3) difficulty of the child in making the transition from regular to resource activities (thoughtful guidance by the resource specialist); (4) the tendency of peers to deny the special needs child an opportunity to participate (encourage turn-taking in answering questions); (5) distractions in the regular class setting (provide resource service in a low activity area of the classroom); and (6) interruptions by classroom children (have an area designated as the resource teacher's space). (DB)

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Hampton University Mainstreaming Outreach Services

Hampton, Virginia

RESOURCE SERVICES... IN THE CLASSROOM?

YES! IN THE CLASSROOM!!!

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PLEASE NOTE: The issues in this paper are addressed at the preschool and kindergarten levels, though basic concepts and techniques are applicable to many educational levels.

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Q. Aren't resource services typically provided OUTSIDE of the regular classroom?

Traditionally, yes. Even with the current trend of mainstreaming, children are routinely pulled from their regular classroom and sent to another room for direct service from the resource teacher or speech and language, occupational, or physical therapist. Clearly, regular and routine expulsion from the classroom is NOT in keeping with the rationale behind mainstreaming - to educate the special needs child in the least restrictive environment to the MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE. For it is possible to provide IN-CLASS resource service.

Q. What are the benefits of providing resource service to the special needs child in the regular classroom?

- The child is most familiar with and comfortable in the regular classroom. In-class resource service in this natural environment most facilitates the child's best performance level.
- Attention is NOT called to the child by pulling him from the classroom away from the activities of his peers. This de-emphasizes the "differences" that might otherwise be perceived by peers and the child himself.
- Children learn from other children. Providing services to the special needs child in a group with 1 or 2 of his normal peers provides him with appropriate role models.

- In-class resource service facilitates more practice of new skills for the child. Because the regular classroom personnel are aware of his resource service goals and objectives, they can carry over skill work into the classroom activities throughout the day and week.

- In-class resource service allows the resource provider to focus on the child as a whole. His mood, activity level, and interests of the day can be assessed or teacher reported, enabling the resource provider to adjust her objective or techniques as necessary.

- In-class resource service provides opportunities for resource and regular classroom personnel to observe and imitate one another's effective techniques in relating to, managing, and teaching the child.

- Placing a special needs child into a regular classroom is not enough to ensure his successful social mainstreaming. Providing resource service in small groups with normal peers is a systematic way to STRUCTURE interactions between normal and special needs children to promote interactions in UNSTRUCTURED situations. Teaching the child to play a table game, for example, in a structured group setting facilitates the development of interactive skills (turntaking, following rules)

that are necessary for child directed play activities.

Q. How can a NORMAL child benefit from the resource service provided in his classroom?

- In-class resource service means higher teacher-child ratio in the regular classroom (if only for a portion of the day). A normal child, therefore, receives extra attention, too, especially when grouped with the special needs child and included in his resource service.

- Working in small groups with the special needs child allows the normal child to:
 - 1) serve as a peer teacher
 - 2) recognize and accept individual differences, strengths, and weaknesses.

- In-class resource service provides an opportunity for resource personnel to observe ALL of the classroom children and possibly identify a "normal" child in need of evaluation or resource services.

Q. What are the problems posed by providing in-class resource service, and can they effectively be overcome?

PROBLEM: Regular classroom and resource personnel alike don't know HOW to carry out in-class resource services.

SOLUTION: TRAINING is essential to develop the effective and

efficient skills and techniques required to provide in-class resource service. And too, PRACTICE makes perfect, learning and growing from both successful and unsuccessful experiences.

PROBLEM: Resource personnel are often perceived by regular classroom personnel as entering into the classroom "to take over." And to the other extreme, resource personnel feel at a disadvantage because they lack control in the regular classroom.

SOLUTION: Communication is essential and utilization of a "working agreement" is a functional strategy to solve this problem. Resource personnel must communicate with regular classroom personnel regarding classroom routine, schedule of activities, behavioral expectations, and implementation procedures, so that they may conform to the classroom routine and practices. Regular classroom personnel must communicate with resource personnel regarding what special needs they may have (e.g., a quiet work area, space to store materials, etc.) The roles and responsibilities of each service provider have then been clearly delineated and defined should be written up in a working agreement. The communication between

regular classroom and resource personnel should be ongoing. Planning meetings must be scheduled on a regular basis (during school hours) so that the personnel can TOGETHER discuss child progress, determine future goals and objectives, and plan strategies for incorporating the resource service into the teacher's schedule and planned activities.

PROBLEM: Transitions need consideration. When time for his resource service, the special needs child must be re-oriented to the resource objectives of the day and away from an activity he may be engaged in. Even if not engaged in an activity, he must be motivated to begin participation in the resource service activity.

SOLUTION: To facilitate transition to the resource objectives, the resource personnel should approach the child, assess the activity he is currently engaged in, and decide if the objectives can be incorporated into that activity. If so, she can engage herself in the child's activity and re-orient the activity toward those objectives. If it is necessary to remove the child from his current activity, the resource provider can ease the transition:

1. Help the child anticipate the new activity in a positive way, such as carrying materials in a box or bag to add an element of surprise.
2. Use materials of known high interest or value to the child and approach him with them in hand.
3. Have the child choose which, will join him in the activity.

PROBLEM: Providing resource service in a group situation becomes difficult when non-turn taking peers blurt out answers, thus denying the special needs child his opportunities to participate.

SOLUTION: Non-turn taking peers can be subdued by using a marker (a token, chip, hat, etc.) to indicate whose turn it is to answer or perform. Or, the "offender" can be given something constructive to say by delegating him to announce whose turn it is. Turn-taking is an issue prevalent during most activities in all settings and is a skill requiring constant practice. Providing resource service in a group situation affords all children involved additional practice at this skill.

PROBLEM: Attending and on task behavior is jeopardized with

in-class resource service due to the environmental distractions of the ongoing classroom activities.

SOLUTION: Distractions can be minimized by providing resource service in a low activity area of the classroom and by positioning the child with his back turned away from other classroom activities.

PROBLEM: Distractions still occur when classroom children not involved in the resource service freely wander inadvertently into that work area.

SOLUTION: If classroom space or set up permits, defining a small group area as "Miss____ work area" will help set classroom space limitations for all the classroom children during resource worktime. If other children wander into the space, a simple explanation such as "It's not your turn NOW to work in this area" is usually sufficient to turn them away (the implication being at some other time, they, too, will have opportunities to work there). If this does not work, prearranged cues between personnel can work effectively. The resource provider may say, "_____, I think Mrs.____ needs to tell you something." That's the regular teacher's cue to re-direct the

intruding child away from the area. Of course, many resource objectives can and should be incorporated into large group activities, as well, such as circle, clean-up, and juice or snack times.

Q. So the problems CAN be overcome in order to provide successful in-class resource service?

TECHNICALLY, the problems CAN be overcome, but success is not automatically ensured. There must be a mutual understanding and acceptance of the rationale behind such service between regular classroom, resource, and administrative personnel alike. There can only be as much success as the convictions behind the rationale. And, too, there must be a mutual professional respect between the regular and resource personnel, each recognizing the importance of what the other has to offer and what can be learned from one another for the children's growth and development, and their own as well.

Upon examining the benefits and problems of in-class resource service, clearly the benefits are ALL on the side of the child, both the special needs AND normal child. Personnel must choose to make a commitment to adapt themselves and their techniques so that these benefits are not sacrificed for the ease and convenience of personnel.