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ABSTRACT

Children with mildly handicapping conditions spend a considerable amount of their instructional lives receiving instruction from general education teachers. At the preservice level, efforts to assist general education teachers have employed one of two models--the inclusion of special education topics into general education coursework and a specific course in special education. This paper reviews previous efforts to provide sufficient expertise in special education; describes models currently being employed at Valparaiso University (Indiana); and reports preliminary results of a student poll. The literature review concludes that teachers with enhanced coursework in education may be best prepared for meeting the needs of students with mild disabilities both in general and special education settings. At Valparaiso University two team-teaching models have been employed. In the first model, the load of a 3-hour foundations class was split between an elementary-education and a special-education professor. The second model involved general and special education faculty cooperatively teaching different sections of the same course, Educational Psychology. Upon completion of coursework, students were asked to respond to a questionnaire soliciting their attitudes toward the team-teaching experience. Respondents endorsed the inclusion of special education faculty into general coursework; however, they were unwilling to eliminate special education-specific courses from their program of study. Student responses to the questionnaire are appended. (Contains 20 references.) (LL)

Cross-Training: Faculty-Sharing Between General and Special Teacher Education Programs.

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Regardless of the position one takes regarding the issues represented by labels such as the Regular Education Initiative, Inclusive Schools, Integration or mainstreaming, it is clear that mildly handicapped children spend a considerable amount of their instructional lives receiving instruction from general education teachers. At the preservice level, efforts to assist general education teachers in meeting the needs of students with mild disabilities have most commonly employed one of two models (Swartz, Hidalgo, & Hayes, 1991). One model encourages the inclusion of special education topics into general education coursework. The other model requires a specific course in special education for general education teachers. Conoley (1989) indicated that "it would be a significant oversight if beginning teachers were not prepared to teach special education students" (p. 251). Conoley continues that in many schools, mainstreaming students with special needs is the rule rather than the exceptions. While there may be some level of agreement regarding the need for enhanced understanding of the needs of students with disabilities and proficiency in meeting the needs of students on the part of general education teachers, there appears to be far less agreement as to the more appropriate and effective ways of reaching these goals (Heller, Sponner, Spooner, Algozzine, Harrison, & Enright, 1991; Swartz, Hidalgo, & Hayes, 1991). As with other areas of educational endeavor and reform, the move to promote the competence of general education teachers in meeting the needs of students with mild disabilities has been characterized by ideas promising great hope, resistance and disappointment and withdrawl of the idea.

This paper will review some of the previous efforts to provide general educators with sufficient expertise in special education topics to meet the needs of students with mild disabilities in their classrooms, describe a method which is currently being examined at Valparaiso University and report the preliminary results of a poll of students participating in a trial of the program.

Programs from the late 70's and early 80's

The call to provide general education teachers with information specific to children with disabilities was met during the 1970's and early 1980's by a program known as Dean's Grants. The Dean's Grants were intended to support models of teacher training which infused special education concepts into regular education curriculum (Aksamit, 1990). Bunsen (1990) reported that the model supported by the Dean's Grants program was generally resisted by both general and special educators. General educators lacked the academic and experiential

preparation required to adequately address the special education issues added to their classes. Special educators doubted their general education colleague's abilities to provide instruction to preservice teachers which would enable them to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The end result was an abandonment of the infusion model and addition of courses in special education to the existing general education requirements. Given the increasing numbers of students who may regarded as being at risk for difficulty in school because of problems in family structure, cultural difference, violence, medical conditions, and a host of other factors (Bartell. & Thurman, 1992; Burgess & Streissguth, 1992; Craig, 1992; Edwards & Jones Young, 1992; Griffith, 1992; Linehan, 1992; Needleman, 1992; Seidel, 1992) it is likely that general education teacher will deal with classrooms with increasingly diverse learners. Some have called for a merger of general and special education teacher training programs as a means to prepare teachers to deal with the current and projected school populations (Bunsen, 1990). Whether the goal of all students learning in the same environment is desirable or even possible, Including more content from special education courses requires teacher educators to select the topics and practices which are most important to include in general education classes. As we shall see, this is not always an easy process.

Teacher Training for Students with Disabilities and General Education Reform

Special education may be seen to be a separate system of education. However, special education for students with mild disabilities is in the unique position of being separate though tied to the system of regular education. Lilly (1989) and Skrtic (1986) are among the authors who decry separate systems of teacher-training and student service-delivery. Lilly stated that separate programs for teacher training reinforced the idea that general education teachers were not actually responsible for teaching the students who were functioning at the bottom of their class. Skrtic suggests that many students who are considered to be mildly disabled are actually artifacts of the system of education presently found in American Schools. Current efforts in restructuring and reform may result in a reduction of the number of students identified as mildly disabled, but only if an entirely different structure is substituted for the one employed at the present (Skrtic, 1987).

Criticisms of General Education Programs

In the Preamble of PL 94-142, Congress noted that substantial numbers of American children were not receiving education of any form, and even more were

receiving and inappropriate education. From this observation, general education programs may be seen in retrospect to be unable or unwilling to accommodate students with disabilities.

Beyond the question of willingness is the more important question of appropriateness. Criticisms of general education programs may inform decision regarding the general appropriateness of these programs for students with disabilities. Hocutt, Martin and McKinney (1991) provide the following list of criticisms of the general education system which have accumulated during the last decade:

* Typically, teachers stand in front of classes imparting knowledge; students listen to lectures, fill in blanks in workbooks, and generally regurgitate rote lessons;
* Class sizes are too large in general, and the average of 150 students per day handled by secondary teachers is too many for the teacher to know and remember;
* A core curriculum is need, especially at the secondary level...;
* Teachers need to be paid more, and a way of providing greater compensation to the best teachers needs to worked out. (p. 23-24).

The model represented by these criticisms is of a generally impersonal and unresponsive system of education. The suggestions for reform of American schools appear encouraging. Suggestions that classes be smaller, include more interactive teaching, and employ mastery learning techniques sound hopeful. "However, the silence about the needs of, or outcomes for, handicapped children in the current reform movement is deafening" (Hocutt, Martin and McKinney, 1991, p.24). It is possible that current reformers are unwilling to engage in prescriptions for an educational endeavor heavily controlled by federal and state regulations and often embroiled in legal and quasi-legal confrontations. It is also possible that reformers believe that all students with mild disabilities will disappear given appropriate reform in general education. A third and more ominous possibility is that the reformers are focussing on the more able students in schools. Given the silence of many school reformers regarding the needs of students with disabilities, it may be even more necessary to provide knowledge and experiences with such students at the preservice level.

Selecting Special Education Methods

Aptitude-Treatment Interactions

Special education programs are commonly assumed to promote disordinal aptitude-treatment interactions as a result of their interventions. Generally, a desirable disordinal interaction occurs when a treatment is effective for students with LD but not for typical students. Reynolds (1990) suggested that there was little support in the literature regarding Aptitude-Treatment Interactions to support qualitatively different forms of instruction for students with mild disabilities, but that some students need more instruction than others. Therefore, according to Reynolds, teachers of mildly handicapped students may not require qualitatively different preparation from that of general education teachers. Instead, opportunities to work intensively with students who are demonstrating poor progress in school are necessary for preservice teachers.

Differential Response to Instruction

While the efficacy of specialized programs in special education is open to question, Brophy and Good (1986) documented a clear benefit for low-achieving students, students with lower ability, and students from low SES backgrounds receiving more control, structure, feedback, and redundancy in their instruction. Also, these students benefit more from an environment which is warm and nurturing compared to students with higher ability. Given the agenda of some of the current school reformers, this type of differential response may point the way to best practice in specialized programs.

Differential Application of Intervention

Scruggs (1991) questioned the need to demonstrate aptitude-treatment interactions in validation of learning disabilities. According to Scruggs, it may not be necessary for a treatment to be demonstrated to be ineffective for typical students in order to support its specialized use for students with learning disabilities. The field of special education is generally moving away from clearly specialized training methods which clearly require specialized training (e.g., perceptual-motor training, multi-sensory training) to greater emphasis on strategy training. However, Scruggs pointed out that the observation that many students might benefit from strategic learning activities cannot be construed to indicate that all students will benefit from the same instruction. In Scruggs' view, differential education may be based on the specific circumstances the interventions need to be applied rather than the collection of disability-specific interventions.

In the event that Reynolds (1990) is correct and interaction with students with special learning characteristics is sufficient to promote quality education for all students in general education settings, then the implications for special education are clear. If Reynolds is correct, we need not continue with specialized training for teachers of mildly handicapped learners. However, if Brophy and Good (1986) and Scruggs (1991) are correct, referral to special education, placement in special education programs and design of instruction in special education programs may be a far more subtle and intricate task than we presently conceive it to be. The implication of this appears to be that both special education and general education teachers will require more background in instruction of populations of diverse learners. While many programs providing special education information to general education teacher target attitude and fears (Heller, et al., 1991) Ferguson and Womack, (1993) reported that specialty coursework in education was the strongest predictor of teaching performance in secondary education majors. Given this, it is likely that teachers with enhanced coursework in education may be best prepared for meeting the needs of students with mild disabilities in general and special education settings.

Cross-Training and Faculty-Sharing

One model which may help provide additional exposure to special education concepts and methods is team-teaching of general education course by special education and general education faculty. At our University, we have employed two models of team-teaching using special education and general education faculty. The first model split the load of a three-hour foundations class entitled "Principles of Education" between an Elementary Education Professor and a Special Education Professor so that the general education faculty member taught 2/3 of the class meetings (2 hours load) and the special education faculty member taught 1/3 of the meetings (1 hour load). This model will be called "split class team-teaching." The second model of faculty-sharing we have used involves general education and special education faculty cooperatively teaching different sections of the same course, Educational Psychology. This model will be called "cooperative team-teaching."

Split Class Team-Teaching

During the semester that the split class team-teaching model was first employed, both faculty members were teaching an overload of classes, involved in community outreach services and preparing for an external accreditation review. Consequently little coordination time was available and the two

components of the course were taught virtually independently. While this was not the model that either faculty member desired, it proved to yield some positive benefits.

Benefits derived from initial implementation. Students enrolled in the class reported that they appreciated the differing perspectives of the special education and general education faculty during the course. They also indicated that it was manageable to have two professors from two related though different disciplines providing the instruction in the course. Students generally reported the benefit of inclusion of the special education faculty member was in the number of examples of applications of the educational principles to instruction and management of students with disabilities that were presented to the class. Most of the students indicated that they believed that these examples were far more plentiful and concrete because of his special education experience. Conversely, the examples and contextual situation of the general education faculty member's instruction was clearly related to her training and experience. Finally, a number of students also indicated that having two instructors broke the class up and added variety and change or pace activities to the semester.

From the perspective of the special education faculty member, the opportunity to teach a foundations-level class was an eye-opening experience. Having the academic and experiential background necessary to infuse special education topics into this general education class appeared to be necessary for the programs operated on the Dean's Grant models in the 1970s and 1980s. However, given the number of topics necessary to cover in this class, it was exceedingly difficult to expand much beyond the scope of the course. Perhaps the earlier programs ignored the harsh reality of the time-limited window of opportunity for instruction available to teachers. There may be an actual limit to the number of concepts and procedures which can be taught within the confines of a semester-long course. Ignoring this limit and imposing additional course content related to special education can do little but evoke the resistance encountered in the Dean's Grant programs.

Difficulties with the split class team-teaching model. At a very pragmatic level, both faculty members engaged in this project were teaching on an overload and received no release time for preparation and coordination. Unfortunately the students noticed that the course was somewhat uncoordinated, though they did not believe this to be a fatal flaw.

Cooperative Team Teaching

The cooperative team-teaching model is presently being employed in our Educational Psychology class. A general education faculty member and a special education faculty member have each been assigned to a section of the class. During the early sessions in joint planning for the course, we found that we were each more conversant and interested in certain topics than others. Rather than finding a middle ground where we would both be comfortable, we decided to capitalize on our personal strengths and divide the course so that each would teach his strongest topics to both class sections. For example, the class has a substantial section on individual differences and exceptional students, which was taught by the faculty member from special education. The section of the class which dealt with culture and community was taught by the general education faculty member whose background includes social studies education. A number of other sections of the course were presented by the instructor assigned to the section (e.g., both taught the Language Development sections to their respective classes.). This required some adjustment of the class schedules as well as the personal schedules of the instructors so that the instruction would proceed in a logical order and allow the class to meet with their instructor a reasonable number of times.

Benefits of cooperative team-teaching. The most clear benefit of this model is the union of expertise and experience of two instructors. Students receive instruction which is clearly in the instructors' range of interest and frame of experience. Though it is too early to collect outcome measures, this approach may provide a more consistently strong and enthusiastic model of instruction for the students. Each instructor in this section is familiar with a different body of literature. Through conversations related to the course topics, a strong and varied class bibliography is being developed. It is doubtful that either would be able to develop as thorough a document independently. Students report that having classes with both professors provides a depth that they feel would be lacking with either professor alone. As with the other model, students report that the number of concrete examples related to students with disabilities is enhanced by this model. On a more mercenary note, a number of students are reporting that they are considering the addition of a special education minor or inclusion of special education courses as electives as a results of early exposure to the special education faculty.

Difficulties with cooperative team-teaching. Scheduling difficulties have been the greatest obstacle in this implementation. While it appears to balance in the final analysis, differences in the amount of planning time required and the number teaching hours in front of the classes arose. Whether this will be an issue remains to be seen. Presently, neither faculty member expresses this as a concern. Perhaps the greatest difficulty with this model will result from pressure to consolidate the two classes into one section due to economic concerns. Should this happen, it is unlikely that an administrative arrangement allowing the flexibility and attention to students afforded by this model can be constructed.

Student Attitudes and Suggestions

Approximately one month after the split class team-teaching activity ended, the students enrolled in the class were contacted and asked to complete a questionnaire soliciting their attitudes toward the team-teaching experience. The responses to the questionnaire are presented in Table 1. All of the students responding to the questionnaire were either in their junior or senior year of college. Fifteen of the twenty students returned the questionnaires for a return rate of 75%. Students who have not yet returned the question aire are presently being recontacted in order to obtain their responses.

The majority of students in the class were not enrolled in the special education program at the university, They were split fairly evenly in their perceptions of differences in faculty approaches and teaching styles. Those who noticed a difference indicated that the special education faculty in this class and other that they had taken at the university tended to be more structured and concrete in their approach. The respondents were consistently positive in their endorsement of the inclusion of special education faculty into their general coursework. Most indicated that this course had helped prepare them to meet the needs of exceptional learners and that continuing the arrangement in subsequent course and topics would also be beneficial. Interestingly, though these students endorsed inclusion of special education faculty and topics into their general methods courses, they were not willing to eliminate the special education-specific courses from their program of study. Most students who supported both inclusion and special education courses indicated that there was more information necessary than could be taught in an embedded manner. Apparently, these students find the special education courses in their program to be useful and necessary in order to provide a organized coherent framework for understanding students with disabilities.

Conclusion

Special educators and general educators are in general agreement of the need for increased knowledge and capability in meeting the needs of students with disabilities on the part of general education teachers. The debate regarding the need for separate systems of service-delivery and teacher training may take on entirely new characteristics depending on the outcome of current reform initiatives in general education. While the reforms presently advocated may hold promise for students with disabilities, the apparent lack of attention to students with special needs inherent in the current reform movements may add to the need for special education competence rather than reduce it. Given this projection, it is important for general education teachers to increase their capacity to serve students with special education needs during their preservice training programs. Earlier attempts at provision of special education information in general education failed because of faculty resistance and issues of preparation and competence. An alternative model capitalizing on the strengths of both general education and regular education faculty has been implemented in two different formats and been well received by both students and faculty. A number of problems such as equality of faculty load and university support for collaborative work need to be worked out. Nevertheless, the faculty inclusion model or cross-training approach appears to warrant further investigation.

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Table 1
Student Responses to Faculty Inclusion Questionnaire

Item	Response	
	Yes	No
1. Are you a Special Education minor?	3	12
2. Do you notice different approaches between professors to similar types of problems which are not attributable to personality?	6	9
3. Are there differences in teaching styles of instructors that they could attribute to differences in discipline?	8	7
4. Do you think that the team-teaching approach helped you develop an interest in dealing with learning and behavior problems that you might encounter in you own classes?	14	1
5. Is there a benefit to having the perspective of special education and regular education presented in the same class?	15	0
6. Would you find it helpful for the special education faculty to co-teach parts of other classes (e.g. methods)?	15	0
7. Do you think that inclusion of special education faculty in other courses would help you to meet the needs of exceptional children in your classes?	13	2

8. Which is a better model, including methods for dealing with exceptional children in general methods courses or having education majors take special education courses?

Including in general methods courses :	5
Take special education courses:	3
Combination of the two:	7