

The Development, Evolution and Application of Special Education Resources

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Abstract

Special education resources were not always a readily available accommodation, or considered to be a universally accepted or necessary system. It is important to examine the historical analysis of how special education attitudes initially developed and how this community was treated, as it allows insight into how the movement has become what it is today. Chapter one focuses on the initial attitudes and treatment toward those with disabilities, and how specific psychological contributors, as well as community based movements have contributed to the societal shift from isolation to integration. Research has recognized the benefits of socialization amongst special education students. Chapter two discusses the importance of socialization for students with disabilities, and how programs can be created or restructured in order to give those students access to the least restrictive learning environment as outlined in the standards of the Individualized Education Plan. While special education reform has come a long way, not all families share an understanding of what these resources entail. Chapter three explores considerations on how to approach families who are hesitant to utilize special education resources. Chapter four gives insight into an actual educational setting, as well as first hand exposure to various special education and disability reform efforts being implemented. Overall, the purpose of this paper is to examine the historical and modern attributes which contributed to special education programs used within schools today in order to ensure the success of the disabled in their endeavors.

Chapter 1: Historical Analysis of the Initial Attitudes Toward and Subsequent Advocacy for Special Education Groups

Special education programs have not always been common. It was not until the 1970s that legal reform to implement special education efforts within schools began. Prior to the development of special education programs, it was common for individuals with disabilities to be isolated from the general group in both an academic and social context. While reform efforts are fairly recent, research on these groups has been present since the early 19th century. Through analyzing historical and current literature, it is evident that the societal viewpoint on those with special needs has vastly changed over time due to a shift in values, as well as a decline in various stigmas. The stances on children with disabilities requiring special education needs and accommodations have changed from an approach of neglect to one of support and acceptance. This can be credited to the works of the various psychologists, researchers, academics and advocacy groups who contributed to the disability rights movement.

Historical Figures and Their Attitudes

Various scholars and researchers have evaluated the disabled community. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the co-founder of the first school of the deaf, was said to take pity upon a little girl and “her unfortunate class” (Barnard, 1854, p.375), which motivated him to dedicate his life to pioneering education for the disabled. In this instance, the term “unfortunate class” is used to describe an entire community of individuals with a negative connotation. It can be inferred that the negative connotation taken to address the disabled community he was catering to was aligned more with societal biases rather than Gallaudet’s himself, as he evidently had good intentions within the disability movement. This was illustrated through direct testimony of those impacted by him, saying “What meed of praise shall be awarded to him who not

only-emancipated a whole class of men, in all states and for all time, from the thrall of ignorance and moral degradation: who not only restored to them their rights, invaluable, inestimable, but the humanity of which they were robbed” (Barnard, 1854, p. 376). This shows the impact which Gallaudet had on the deaf community, not only playing a part in separating them from ignominy, but also giving them the opportunity to pursue a fair education. This led to a university being named after him in 1864, just 13 years after his death. Gallaudet University, located in Washington D.C., is the only liberal arts college in the world which is exclusively tailored toward deaf students. This shows the impact which Gallaudet had on the special education movement, taking the disconnect between society and those with disabilities in the 1800s and personally transforming the learning experience for those with this disability.

Authors contributing to the *American Phrenological Journal* (1857) also mentioned the methods of Gallaudet, crediting him with successfully contributing to the education of these children through various measures and introducing the methods to other countries. When these authors visited a school which grouped those with disabilities together with those considered to be psychotic, they were surprised to find the children, or “company of little urchins” (*American Phrenological Journal*, 1857, p.14) getting along peacefully. The grouping of those with disabilities along with criminal or violent children showed the evident disregard which society still held for those with disabilities, despite conscious considerations and awareness of the positive contributions of figures such as Gallaudet to the movement. The fact that the surveyors expected to find the children engaging in reckless behavior showed the prejudice which was bestowed upon them. They even insisted that those with disabilities “have no facts, no wants, no aspirations” (*American Phrenological Journal*, 1857, p. 15). This illustrated the degradation and discrediting of those with disabilities which was published during the 1800s.

Around the same time, various debates regarding the origins, as well as the prevention, of disabilities were circulating amongst researchers and psychologists. The nature versus nurture debate, initiated by Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and further investigated by Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, was a widespread controversy. Galton, who was one of the first experimental psychologists, was an advocate for eugenics. Galton himself derived this term from the Greek phrase "eugenes", which means "good in stock" (Galton, 1883, p.18). He wanted to coin a "brief word to express the science of improving stock" (Galton, 1883, p.18). Galton was the chief defendant of the practice of eugenics, advocating for selective breeding measures in order to attain a perfect society without the presence of any individuals who inhibited undesirable traits, including those with disabilities (Stephens & Cryle, 2017). The practice of eugenics involved assessing a person's genetically determined social worth and fitness (Antonak, 1993). During Galton's time, those with disabilities ranked low in social desirability, as was illustrated through their general treatment as well as the published literature circulating on the topic. Galton essentially did not want anyone to be part of society that had a disability, and aimed to control the evolution of society by containing the groups which he found to be problematic and eliminating them (Galton, 1904).

English psychologist Cyril Burt spent time attempting to figure out if "feeble-mindedness," a term used in reference to special education children, was a cause of environmental or genetic influence (Burt, 1912). Burt and Galton had a personal connection, with Burt's father being a family doctor who treated the Galton family (Chitty, 2013). As a result, Burt embraced Francis Galton's findings, forming the opinion that intelligence was mostly inherited, and subsequently proposed eugenics and other ideas to "cure" child delinquency. Burt spent his life studying the inheritance of IQ and other intelligence measures, becoming the first

British psychologist to be knighted and receiving attention for his twin studies. These studies, however, would be the downfall of Burt's reputability, as they led to the surfacing of the "Burt Scandal" (Jensen, 1991). This alleged that Burt's data had been faked, and that he was guilty of deception later in his career (Clark, 1981). Although these claims have yet to be completely resolved, Burt's status as a once renowned psychologist studying both gifted and delinquent children had been impaired nonetheless.

Physicians such as Samuel Gridley Howe proposed that children with disabilities were born that way because of their parents' violation of natural laws, therefore producing an "unfit instrument for the manifestation of the powers of the soul" (Howe, 1858, p.366). Howe was said to have viewed disabilities as a "social disease", deriving from immortality or sinning (Flynn, 2017). Similarly to the American Phrenological Journal, he implied an association between criminals and violent individuals and those who have special education needs such as the blind and the deaf (Howe, 1874). By doing this, he contributed to the stigma around those with disabilities. Society further succumbed to this stigma by collectively assuming negative connotations of those within the disabled community. However, Howe did strive to provide care for the disabled, believing them to have the potential to be trained and redeemed from their unaccepted habits (Howe, 1874).

Many groups which researchers and psychologists associated with further promoted sterilization and additional efforts to prevent those with disabilities from spreading them to their offspring and further perverting society. For example, the Eugenic Records Office at Cold Springs Harbor wrote the 'Model Eugenical Sterilization Law' (Antonak et al, 1993). This proposal was designed in order to provide a legal template that could be adapted and eventually applied into lawful policy and programs. This showed the measures which communities were

willing to take in order to eliminate the disabled population, going so far as to propose laws which would allow drastic measures such as sterilization and other eugenical processes to be carried out within the disabled community.

Henry H. Goddard was an American psychologist and eugenicist. Goddard believed in limiting the reproductive capacity of those who were “morons”, a term which he is credited with inventing for clinical use when describing individuals with disabilities (Antonak et al, 1993). Goddard also felt that segregating those with disabilities was an appropriate effort, and he supported the idea of creating specialized colonies for these individuals to congregate within (Goddard, 1920). He felt that those who had low IQs were to be identified as a “menace of society and of civilization” (Goddard, 1915, p. 307) because their IQs were considered insufficient to function within the various social structures that were becoming present in the increasingly advancing free world. Goddard rationalized this thought through his adoption of the Binet-Simon scale of intelligence, which he is credited with introducing to the United States after discovering it in Belgium and presenting it to his colleagues. He became the principal advocate of using this test in the diagnosis of mental deficiency in America, distributing thousands of copies of the manual over the years (Antonak et al, 1993). Researchers such as himself would attempt to identify those with disabilities, and then use this test as justification for eugenics. His motives behind using the test were not aligned with those of the creator, Alfred Binet.

Alfred Binet was a French psychologist who sought to create a measure of general intelligence. This was primarily because teachers and doctors during this time were often accused of making unreliable diagnoses of intelligence (McCredie, 2017). Binet emphasized that IQ scores were not meant to define permanent conditions, and they were to be used as a rough guide to improve the learning experience of the disabled. However, researchers such as Goddard

took the test and skewed it from its initial intentions. Binet himself believed in finding methods to keep children in schools, directly contrasting the views of others who supported segregation and eugenics such as Goddard and Galton (Nicolas et al, 2013).

Similarly, Lev Vygotsky was a Soviet psychologist who had a view relatable to the perspective of Binet. He believed that dividing those who were disabled from the general population would only enhance the separatism between the two. He said “instead of helping children escape from their isolated worlds, our special school usually develops in them tendencies which direct them toward greater and greater isolation and which enhance their separatism” (Vygotsky, 1929/1993, p.65). Vygotsky was against the idea of creating segregated disabled communities, believing it would eliminate any opportunity to integrate those with disabilities into society.

In contrast, Désiré-Magloire Bourneville was a French neurologist who dedicated his life to pediatric neurology. Bourneville supported isolation measures within special education. He thought that disabled children would be better off if they were removed from the standard curriculum and instead referred to an asylum-school. He felt that specialized institutions would provide “medico-educational treatment that could be applied to idiot, epileptic, retarded children” (Plantade, 2015, p.268). It can be inferred through Bourneville's dedication and positive contributions that he likely had good intentions for the betterment of those with disabilities through these propositions, but was also following the then-normalized social pattern of isolation and institutionalization in his proposals.

Instances of Mistreatment

High profile attention on misjustices toward those with disabilities induced a societal shift toward establishing different standards of assistance for those with disabilities. A significant

event which gained national attention on this issue was the exposé on The Willowbrook School by journalist Geraldo Rivera in 1972 after he was given a key by a recently fired Dr. Michael Wilkins. Wilkins was dismissed from employment at the institution because of his efforts to educate parents on reform needed within the school (Flynn, 2017).

The Willowbrook State School (1947-1987) was initially established as an institution for children with intellectual disabilities, but it became the site of a major turning point in the history of disability rights that revolutionized the way in which the care of people with disabilities was to be addressed (Flynn, 2017). It became an overcrowded institution, housing over 2,000 more adults and children than their maximum capacity allowed. Residents at the school were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Weiser, 2020). They were also unwilling participants in Defense Department-funded medical research on hepatitis and other diseases. In these studies, children were intentionally given the virus in order to gain understanding into its variations. Vaccinologist Maurice Hilleman described the hepatitis studies performed at the institution as “the most unethical medical experiments ever performed on children in the United States” (Offitt, 2007, p.27).

Willowbrook residents were denied their basic rights while living at the school, receiving even less benefits than those in prisons. It was emphasized that prisons allotted 80 square feet per inmate, while Willowbrook provided only 35 square feet per resident as well as no space for personal belongings (Dalton, 2020). Due to the social stigma surrounding those with disabilities at the time, as well as the conditions of the school, employee interest was low, resulting in staff members not having to submit a background check for employment. The staff to patient ratio was estimated to be about 50:1 (Dalton, 2020). Willowbrook is often referred to as the symbol of

deinstitutionalization in America because of the horrific conditions which its residents endured (Flynn, 2017).

The closing of Willowbrook was not a seamless process. Parents of the children residing there collaborated to produce the *New York State Association for Retarded Children v. Carey* (1972), which claimed the conditions at Willowbrook violated the constitutional rights of the residents. Various negotiations took place, with the Willowbrook Consent Decree (1975) eventually being implemented with the intent to improve living conditions and placement options for these children. The school closed in 1987 after years of public outcry.

Similarly, the Pennhurst State School and Hospital, or the Eastern Pennsylvania State Institution for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic (1908-1987), was an institution meant to provide care for those with disabilities. Pennhurst was engulfed in controversy throughout its operation, with its chief physician quoting Henry Goddard and his eugenic remarks when discussing methods of isolation and contraceptive efforts implemented within the school (Schmidt, 1983). The facility was regarded as “understaffed, dirty and violent” (“Law: Patients' Rights”, 1981, para.1). Drugs were often used for staff to exert control over patients instead of for treatment purposes, and patients often suffered from physical deterioration as well as overall regression from their stays at the institution. Harsh methods of punishment were a commonality for residents, such as electric shock therapy machines and teeth pullings of inobedient patients (Beitiks, 2012).

The Pennhurst State School was subjected to a class action lawsuit, *Halderman v. Pennhurst State School & Hospital* (1974) after a television exposé by Bill Baldini was aired in 1968 exposing the conditions within the hospital, which continued to deteriorate after the release of the exposé despite promises of improvement. Pennhurst was found to be unable to provide the

appropriate care which violates federal and state law ensured for its patients. Prominent civil rights attorney David Ferleger, who represented the plaintiffs of the case, stated the court ruled “retarded people placed in state facilities have a right to adequate care free from discriminatory separation from nonretarded people, and that the institution was irredeemably incapable of providing that care” (Ferleger & Boyd, 1979, p. 718). Despite various appeals, as well as multiple arguments in the Supreme Court, this resulted in the closing of Pennhurst in 1987, which was coincidentally the same year which Willowbrook closed its doors.

Advocacy Instances

In addition to the lawsuits which initiated the deinstitutionalization of disabled students, various laws were drafted and proposed during the disability rights movement. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was introduced as one of the first federal civil rights laws that offered documented protection for people with disabilities, as well as prohibited discrimination. It ensured the upholding of the dignity and respect of disabled individuals. However, there was much delay and opposition to the ruling, resulting in stalling of the law being properly regulated. As a result, the 504 Sit-Ins took place, which consisted of demonstrators marching across the nation to advocate for the regulations and enforcement of Section 504. One demonstration, the San Francisco federal building sit-in, lasted 26 days (Osorio, 2022). This was the longest sit-in at a federal building (Lu, 2021). Regulations were finally signed four years after the law passed on April 28, 1977 (Carmel, 2020).

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or the ADA, prohibited discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life which the general public had access to, ensuring equal access to resources amongst all. The law was stalled for months by the House Committee, which led to various protests being organized by concerned activists, including The

Capitol Crawl. The Capitol Crawl, which took place on March 13, 1990, saw over 1,000 protestors march from the White House to the U.S. Capitol to demand that Congress pass the ADA (Little, 2020). During the protest, several participants who were in wheelchairs abandoned the devices and crawled up the stairs of the Capitol, which was symbolic of the right to reasonable accommodations which the ADA contained (Carmel, 2020). The crawl directly illustrated the barriers which were in place for people with disabilities, and therefore gave a visual representation of the necessity for the law to be signed. As a result of this protest, the law was signed months later on July 26, 1990 (Little, 2020).

Legal Efforts

In addition to the legal advocacy efforts pertaining to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, various other legal implementations were made in order to further secure the rights of those with disabilities. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, as well as Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, or the IDEIA, focused on special education reform in particular.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act made it mandatory to make education equally accessible to those with physical and mental disabilities. The act declared that those with physical and mental disabilities must be given equal opportunity to education, as well as one free meal a day. This also introduced the idea of the least restrictive environment, which paved the way for admitting children with disabilities into the general student classrooms. This was something that was not always practiced within schools, especially before the 1970s (Larson, 1985).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, or IDEIA, introduced various elements to law regarding special education procedure. The primary goal of

IDEIA was to improve learning outcomes and accessibility for students with disabilities (Yell et al, 2006). Standout pieces of the legislation included the expansions of the least restrictive environment (LRE), the individualized education program (IEP), and the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) (Yell et al, 2006). This law made the appropriate resources available for those with disabilities in order to gain a fair education which is specific to their needs. The IDEIA is an expansion of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or the IDEA, which was passed in 1990. One of the reasons IDEA was amended was its language. The writing influenced teachers to misidentify minority students as having learning disabilities. The IDEIA also required states to establish goals for students with disabilities that aligned closer to the goals of their general education peers, which the IDEA did not fully consider (Renner, 2023).

Continuous Flaws Despite Improvement

Many efforts for special education advocacy led to an overabundance of students being determined as special needs, which took away from the resources received by those who actually needed it (Belluck, 1996). This can be illustrated from the fact that twelve years after the Education for All Handicapped Children Act took effect, the number of handicapped students in US public schools had increased to 11 percent of their total enrollment, showing a need for specialized and appropriate learning (Daniels, 1988).

Diana v. State Board of Education (1970) exposed placement errors and biases within testing systems despite heightened reform efforts. Schools were thereby forced to be more diligent in their testing and assignment processes. This involved determining whether the educational problems of children were actually the result of a learning disability or due to other possible factors. Larry P. V Riles (1972) expanded on Diana, marking the beginning of the end to

IQ testing in school settings. Financial cuts or other fiscal restraints have also had various regressive effects on the efforts made to tailor special education (Weintraub & Ramirez, 1985).

Despite implemented changes, thousands of students are still deprived of the services of which they have the right to access. Just as recently as 2016, the New York City Department of Education found that nearly 9,000 students recommended for services were not receiving them at all, and more than 60,000 students were receiving only some of the services they needed. (Taylor, 2016). This illustrates that despite the reform efforts which have taken place throughout history, there is still work to be done to ensure all students benefit from the sacrifices and advocacy that so many people fought for.

Conclusion

While the initial evaluation and attitudes toward those with special needs involved sometimes undesirable elements, as the field has matured through advocacy efforts, psychologists and researchers have seen a considerable turnabout in the field in comparison to its initial quality. Psychologists in particular have contributed to various advocacy efforts through doing research and reporting their findings and stances to lawyers and representatives of parental groups (Routh, 2005). Although contrasting views were evidently present, ranging from the controversial ideas of Galton and Goddard to the progressive and embracing contributions of Binet, Gallaudet and Vygotsky, all input provided helped shape the field to become the way it is known today. Although some, such as Howe and Bourneville meant well by supporting special schools, they were unsuccessful. It took a movement, as well as the presence of appalling scandals such as Willowbrook and Pennhurst to get things to change. These changes have now allowed those with disabilities of any kind which require special accommodations the opportunity to gain an education that is valuable to their specific needs.

Chapter 2: The Importance of Socialization in School Children with Individualized Education Plans

The field of special education encompasses many different circumstances, including specialized programs, tailored services, and specifically designed instruction. Each child who qualifies as special needs shares a common denominator. That is the fact that each child is given an IEP, also known as an Individualized Education Plan. The IEP is designed as a personalized plan for students to achieve academic success in their general education curriculum in a way which aligns with their specific needs (Kurth et al, 2021). A primary goal within the IEP is access to the LRE, or the least restrictive environment, which encourages those with an IEP to gain access to the general class environment (IDEA, 2004), allowing them to socialize amongst their peers. This review will analyze how the socialization of, as well as the environment in which children with IEPs interact, strengthens the academic, socioemotional, functional, and overall wellness outcomes of these students.

Role of Social Development Theory

The ideas of Lev Vygotsky and his Social Development theory concluded that social interactions and social relations are primary sources of development (Rubtsov, 2020). He argued against the social prejudices that were being continuously enforced against handicapped individuals (Vygotsky, 1929/1993), advocating for inclusion and collaboration between advanced students and those who require assistance. Additionally, he emphasized the zone of proximal development, which relies heavily on peer interaction to achieve success. The zone of proximal development is the space between what someone can learn without assistance and what they are capable of learning with assistance (Gindis, 1999). Through this particular theory and his general works, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction between peers, as well as the

role of a learning person's environment in their advancements, as it was his belief that learning is influenced by the environment.

Social Participation

In the past, literature has often concluded that isolation of those with special needs was the best course of action to ensure the success of both general education students and special needs students. This concept of isolation has been heavily researched and debated, and it has been concluded that exclusion can have negative effects on both learning and social skills (Freeman & Alkin, 2000). This has resulted in current laws advocating for student inclusion. The primary act which solidified this was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Sec. 300.114. This section of the law requires that students with special needs are placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in order to allow students to be integrated within a unified learning environment. This 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 nondisabled” (US Department of Education, 2017, p. 31).

The International Journal of Educational Methodology acknowledges the fact that historically, children with disabilities in most parts of the world have not been given access to the educational opportunities offered by traditional schooling (Somma & Bennett, 2020). This journal accounts for how these changes should be implemented schoolwide through the acknowledgement that the pedagogy itself may require reform, as teachers’ confidence, attitudes, and willingness toward inclusion itself are factors in determining the success of inclusion for students (Somma & Bennett, 2020). After investigating the literature of Schoger (2006), it is clear that socialization contributes to the overall wellbeing and advancement of those with special needs. Not only do those with disabilities benefit from interaction with others with

disabilities, but those without disabilities do as well. It is paramount to consider the idea that although a child may have a disability, they are still children in nature. Because of this, just as other children do, children with disabilities will still learn from their environment, regardless of what that environment's circumstances may be (Schoger, 2006). This emphasizes the importance of surroundings and a positive environment, as these children will pick up on the atmosphere around them, as all children do, which in turn will influence their habits and practices in the academic setting.

Youth experiences of social participation as a whole are related to the social interactions of which they observe in their school environment (Vetoniemi and Kärnä, 2021). This emphasizes the idea that necessary socialization skills are initially formed in school, and develop as one grows older and further assimilates into society. This ties into the functional outcomes of students with disabilities partaking in traditional classroom activities and settings, as it allows them to observe and participate in the standard conditions of their peers and become accommodated to the practical expectations of society. The idea of heterogeneous grouping, where students are interacting with their age level peers who fall within all different levels of ability, as well as a balanced educational experience were popular amongst educators in particular, as it allowed students to experience diverse levels of knowledge and adjust appropriately (Somma & Bennett, 2020). By exploring the literature of those who have experienced the results of these types of environments and learning structures on children, we are able to better understand how these changes positively impact the special education field as a whole.

Inclusion & Benefits of IEP's

The support of IEPs and the benefits that they bring to children with disabilities is evidently conveyed through the acknowledgement that the social, as well as academic benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities have been well researched and well documented (Schoger, 2006). In the instance of the Reverse Inclusion Theory, those with disabilities “started to initiate social interactions with not only their reverse inclusion friends, but other peers as well” (Schoger, 2006, p. 7). This shows that through implementing inclusive measures, students took initiative to become more sociable on their own. In addition to this, after just eighteen weeks of increased socialization, the children improved on both their participation and communication skills. This data showed that promoting an environment made up of inclusionary practices, as well as placing an emphasis on social interactions, resulted in positive enhancements and functioning in the behavior and demeanor of those students with disabilities.

Educators have recognized the benefits of switching to a fully inclusive pedagogy on the basis of collaboration and observational learning (Somma & Bennett, 2020). This is due to positive experiences and advancements such as the development of independence and socialization skills. Many instances of children with disabilities paired with collaboration have proven to be successful in relation to both social and academic success (Somma & Bennett 2020). The learning environment is also emphasized by acknowledging that inclusion extends beyond their lessons. The concept also expands into the attitudes and beliefs of all students in the class and school environments, therefore integrating standards of inclusion into everyday life. One study found effective communication elevated the student's abilities to adhere to collaboration efforts, as well as take note of practical ways to work together within and outside of classrooms. This resulted in a shared understanding of inclusionary measures across

environments (Garcia et al, 2022). This illustrates that promoting a positive classroom culture with reinforcement is essential to driving student interaction and inclusion. Additionally, Schoger (2006) makes the point that social skills are developed from observational learning, which means that these students require increased opportunities to observe the socially acceptable, age-appropriate behaviors that their general education peers exhibit in order to create their own understanding of social cues. By keeping this idea in mind, it is chiefly important to allow those with disabilities to have hands-on experience with those who do not have disabilities, as it allows them to gain an integrative perspective on various aspects of their peers' habits and sociability.

Impact of Social Exclusion

Various other literature takes into perspective the idea of social exclusion. Beld et al. (2019) acknowledge that risk factors for social exclusion may be particularly disproportionate in special education classes due to the accommodations which these students may need. The importance of adequate social information processing, which is obtained mostly through social scenarios, is emphasized. When a child lacks socialization, they may possess inadequate social skills and have inappropriate reactions to social situations. This may cause these particular students to isolate themselves and become incapable of building and maintaining rewarding social relationships with their peers. This then ties into emotional isolation, which can result in a lack of self regulation and tendency to have outbursts. Vetoniemi and Kärnä (2021) focus on the experiences of students with special education needs in a mainstream school environment. Similarly to Beld et al. (2019), these writers mention how an exclusionary environment can have a negative impact on students with disabilities. This is because exclusion can cause these students to feel isolated and lonely, therefore leading them to become discouraged to socialize and interact with peers. This instance shows the socioemotional implications which exclusion

can have on children with disabilities, and how this can affect the way in which they see and feel about themselves and others. This can contribute to the formation of negative feelings, as well as contribute to hesitancy and discouragement to get involved with peers. Sullivan and Castro (2013) discuss responses to intervention, or RTI's, which tie directly into these ideas regarding socioemotional adaptation and implications. They make the point that RTIs may "contribute to the positive socialization of students by reducing inappropriate and unnecessary placements in special education, thereby minimizing stigmas and stereotypes associated with labeling" (Sullivan & Castro, 2013, p. 185). This shows that the process of diagnostic decision-making is important, as these interventions determine the environment in which students are placed to learn. By minimizing the unnecessary placements in the classroom, staff may be more encouraged to implement more constructive and practical interventions in the working environment. This also allows schools to focus on all students and create socialization plans that positively impact every student.

Integrity and Attitudes

Intervention integrity plays a part in the child's experience as a whole, as well as their attitudes toward participation in a mainstream schooling environment (Sullivan & Castro, 2013). If the intervention process is presented in a positive manner, this may further motivate the child to willingly partake in activities that promote advancement. The initial presentation as well as upholding of the classroom environment plays a part in the results seen from intervention. In addition to this, changing the historical standard of children being pulled out for more individualized instruction will contribute to students' motivation and incentive to socialize and create meaningful connections in the classroom.

The idea of isolation as a whole goes back to the primary idea of a positive, inclusionary environment. It is inferred that a positive classroom climate affects students' social skills in a positive way, as it allows them to develop a positive perception of social relationships by participating in positive interactions (Beld et al., 2019). It has been discovered that efforts to promote a positive classroom environment were associated with low levels of social exclusion, showing that environment plays an important role in the experiences of these children as a whole in regards to their social, functional, and emotional experiences. This shows that the environment and overall classroom culture play an important role in the overall success and experiences of students with special needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, current literature shows that children with IEPs make advancements through socialization with other school children. Children with IEPs who are placed in integrative learning scenarios are likely to become more socially fluent and adaptable, setting them on a path to succeed in their future endeavors. It has been illustrated that integrative learning offers not only academic benefits, but also various other benefits such as the strengthening of their social, functional and emotional skills, and therefore preparing them to advance adequately both during and post engagement in an academic setting. Future research should continue to investigate how to maximize the equity and accessibility of the educational experiences of children with IEPs.

Chapter 3: Considerations for Approaching Hesitant Families to Utilize Special Education Resources

A potential problem which may occur within the school system is a parent or guardian not being completely comfortable with allowing their child to access school resources such as an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP. Within the goals outlined in an IEP, there are many resources available to children who need a more individualized approach to learning. Various outside factors, however, may stand in the way of their guardian giving the school permission to implement these approaches. This can be an issue because parents need to provide consent for their child to partake in any additional school resources. If a child is recommended resources that a parent may not agree with, there are various processes in place to handle disagreements. Throughout this chapter, solutions will be discussed in order to give a clear understanding into the processes which help solve this problem in schools.

Hesitance can be derived from several factors, but one that seems to cause a large issue within accepting school resources is cultural differences (Barrio, 2021). Cultural differences tend to stand as a blockade for parents when presented with the opportunity to accept school resources. A lack of communication, as well as lack of adequate informational resources, also contributes to parental hesitancy (Lo, 2012). Some parents may perceive a cultural mismatch of beliefs and values from their children's school, contributing to apprehension toward accepting accommodations (Barrio, 2021). This can result in conflict between parent and teacher, which as a result directly impacts the student's academic experience (Lasater, 2016). Being sensitive and respectful to cultural differences is important to ensure mutual understanding, and it is important to reassure these families that their personal values will not be infringed upon or overlooked within the academic environment.

Regardless of the reason parents decline school resources, the relationship between parents and teachers is what really drives the success of educational planning. Parents and teachers must work together in order to find the most efficient educational plan for a student. This relationship stands as the foundation for student success. This is an issue within the educational environment because parental and teacher conflict can negatively influence the child's behavior, as one study found fluctuations in student-teacher closeness contributed to increased aggression in children (Lee & Bierman, 2018). It can also affect their learning habits, as it was revealed that student participants reported experiencing anxiety or self-doubt as a result of disagreements between their parents and teachers (Lasater, 2016).

A three-year study indicated that special education teachers provided the most input in IEP meetings about students' strengths, needs, and interests (Mereoiu et al, 2016). While this is a positive aspect and illustrates teacher involvement, it also shows a need for more parental involvement and input. Since "the house is the first educational environment, and the first community in which a child lives and grows" (Abed, 2014, p.1), a closely aligned relationship between home and school is integral to the growth and development of a child. The legal system supports this sentiment, as the laws surrounding special education "encourage a working relationship between the home and school that fosters an educational team with the goal of providing the child with appropriate services" (Mueller, 2009, p.60). Meaningful engagement is an important aspect of collaboration which requires informed consent on the parental spectrum, as well as total accessibility to information on specialized programs (Rossetti et al, 2018). The support of families and school personnel is integral to the success of any educational planning on behalf of the child. Hesitance to work collaboratively may affect the learning outcomes of the child (Bryce et al, 2019).

Solution: Advocacy and Support Resources

A potential solution to this problem is the implementation of resources such as advocacy training or an Individualized Family Service Plan, which may make families feel more comfortable in accepting accommodations. The use of advocacy training programs such as the Special Education Advocacy Training and the Volunteer Advocacy Project (Burke, 2013) may allow parents to feel more in control of their role in the planning process of the IEP, encouraging them to feel secure in contributing to the conversation and accepting staff recommendations. There are also resources available such as the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which involves a “team-based approach with a focus on the child, family, and natural environments” (DeSpain & Hedin, 2022, p.171). Adopting this type of advocacy may be useful as it allows parents to formally consider and document environmental factors both at home and in school when assessing the progress of a child. Holding Facilitated Individual Education Program meetings, or FIEPs, allow mediation between parents and staff in order to come to the best decision. The aim of FIEP meetings is to provide the team with the opportunity to work through issues of disagreement throughout the IEP document collaboratively, with a facilitator or advocate available to provide support as needed (Mueller & Vick, 2019).

Solution: Increased Knowledge and Emphasis on Collaboration

An additional solution to solve the problem of at home and in school balance and consensus is increasing knowledge on the programs, as well as emphasizing the importance of collaboration throughout the process. There is a particular importance of knowing and understanding the family structure and culture, as well as defining partnership as giving a balance of power between both parents and teachers according to the setting. A model of partnership should be mutually selected, which is mostly dependent on the parents and their

willingness, but should work best for all parties involved (Abed, 2014). Placing an emphasis on the idea of partnership, opposed to giving one party dominance when determining the best course of action makes both parties increasingly assured in their confidence toward potential successes (deFur, 2012). Knowledge on both ends is an important aspect as well. Some teachers likely don't realize that the families of children might feel frustrated with what they perceive as unsuccessful and culturally insensitive IEP meetings (Rossetti et al, 2016). Accomplishing cultural sensitivity can be achieved by asking if families would like an interpreter at meetings, or by making the effort to inquire about information on the families' culture, which may help achieve a better understanding of the student (Edwards & Da Fonte, 2012). This also sets an example for the child of how they can properly function in a team environment, serving as an additional learning experience.

A key aspect of partnership is mutual knowledge and understanding. Many parents who are from other countries may not know what exactly they are walking into when an IEP meeting is set. Receiving background information on the topic, either through an interpreter, staff member, or even through implementation of other resources such as an introductory video before the meeting may make the process easier for both parties, as well as more comfortable for the parent (Lo, 2012). When considering these types of situations, culturally responsive transitions made toward an IEP involves acknowledging the cultural priorities which the family holds, as well as giving the family a space to vocalize their personal needs and their envisioned long-term goals in the decision-making process (Barrio, 2021).

Solution: Official Mediated Processes

If all efforts to amend the situation fail, parents do have the right to call for impartial hearings under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Zirkel, 2012). Parents may opt for this if

they feel their child is not being given access to a free appropriate public education, or FAPE.

The predominant avenue for resolving these disputes is an impartial hearing (Zirkel, 2012).

Impartial hearings are mediated by a hearing officer. This officer listens to both sides and decides the best way to move forward. While this process may be useful to resolve a case, the implications of a child witnessing parent-teacher conflict were found to consistently have a negative effect on the child's learning outcomes (Lasater, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, various responsibilities fall both on the guardians as well as the school staff when collaborating for a child's advancement. Outside factors such as cultural competency, barriers, and understanding contribute to parental hesitancy to enroll their children in school facilitated programs or objectives. Proposing solutions such as promotion of cultural understanding and sympathy on both ends, increase of resources to enhance parental knowledge, advocacy resources and support for parents, or if all else fails, official processing, may be beneficial. Through ensuring a mutually understanding relationship between parent and school, as well as placing an emphasis on the wellbeing and growth of the child, planning and agreeing on routes of success for the child are more probable.

Chapter 4 redacted to remove personal reflections and any identifying information.

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