Analysis of the validity of the self-contained classroom and the resource room, as an alternative, for the learning disabled child

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE VALIDITY OF THE
SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM AND THE RESOURCE ROOM,
AS AN ALTERNATIVE, FOR THE LEARNING DISABLED CHILD

by

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A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
(EDUCATION OF LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN)
AT CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1976
This research paper has been
approved for the Graduate Committee
of Cardinal Stritch College by

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Date 3/1/76
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Issues Under Consideration

Learning disabilities has become the most rapidly expanding and controversial field in education while the validation of the various practices are being seriously questioned by educators and parents. The purpose of the learning disability programming is to assist the handicapped learner toward more successful academic achievement and personal adjustment.¹ Yet, it has been referred to as an appalling movement and a destructive force.²

The extreme differences of opinion seem to stem from the conflict between good intentions and the reality that actually exists today. Good intentions during the last decade included federal agencies spending millions of dollars on a variety of research, training and service programs for handicapped children with regard for each child's


constitutional right to receive help in learning to the limits of his capacity, whether that capacity be great or small.¹ The contradiction occurs when the educational system, which exists for the welfare of the individual, has been totally oblivious to the negative consequences which exist beyond the intended functions of placement of children in special classes.² An educational dilemma occurs when the negative social and emotional side-effects cannot be rationalized to warrant special placement. The validity of the claims that the special self-contained classroom creates negative self-concepts, is socially damaging and does not enhance academic achievement to any greater degree than regular classroom instruction has not yet been conclusively established by research. However, there are studies which indicate strongly that these classes are not really so special.³

¹Gearheart, Learning Disabilities--Educational Strategies, p. 175.


Statement of Purpose

It was the intent of this paper to analyze these controversial issues in an effort to weigh the apparent negative implications against the theorized gains; and to explore the possibility that the resource room can salvage the best parts of the special classroom and effectively substitute for it.

One of the major issues of contention is the process by which students become members of the special class. It is felt that removing a child from a regular class because he is not learning (or refuses to) distinguishes him as subnormal or different because he has failed to measure up to the standardized expectations.¹ This critical and unintended function of the special self-contained classroom has become a prime target of criticism since it necessitates classification and labeling.

The avowed goal of the classification process was to enable an approach which would look at the complete child, but the outcome has resulted in a stigma which segregates the child emotionally as it separates him physically. There has been some recent forming of insights and understanding of the social dimensions of special education, but yet

the instructional strategies have the priority over care-
ful consideration of the social and personal impact of a 
child's new educational status.\textsuperscript{1}

Many of the education experts maintain that special 
education can be justified since many children are unable 
to profit from regular instruction and do need adapted 
curricula and teaching assistance in a small group setting.\textsuperscript{2} 
However, special education programs must now provide a 
rational and valid answer to the question of what is "special" 
about them. A major change in special educational philosophy 
occurred in the early 1970's with the move away from special 
classes for the mentally handicapped.\textsuperscript{3} Education had 
come full circle in the analysis of how to handle children 
with learning problems.\textsuperscript{4} Although the trend now is to 
integrate mentally retarded children, there is a reverse 

\textsuperscript{1}M. Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without 
Special Classes," \textit{Journal of School Psychology} 10 (June 

\textsuperscript{2}D. A. Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance 
in Special Education," \textit{Journal of Special Education} 6 

\textsuperscript{3}W. Bryan Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Chil-
dren: The Social Dimension," \textit{International Review of Educa-

\textsuperscript{4}B. R. Anderson, "Mainstreaming is the Name for a New 
Idea: Learning Resource Centers for Special Education," 
trend by segregating the learning disabled.\(^1\) The well-intentioned learning disabilities classrooms have been in full swing since the late 1960's with about forty percent of all American children allegedly qualifying as "handicapped" members.\(^2\)

Special education is growing uncomfortable with the special classes as the sole form of instruction, as is evidenced by the increased interest in the resource room.\(^3\) There has been a search for alternative educational strategies which can maintain children in a regular class, but provide them the special help they may require for portions of the school day.\(^4\) The comparative effectiveness of the resource room is in need of conclusive results also and an answer to the question: "Aside from the child's membership in a regular class, how really different or better are the services provided by the resource room?"


\(^3\)Joseph R. Jenkins; William F. Mayhall; Corrine M. Peschka; and Linda M. Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms," Exceptional Children (January 1974).

\(^4\)Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."
Definitions

Learning Disabilities

There is a considerable difference of opinion on what constitutes a learning disability. Educators are slowly moving away from the costly and inaccurate assumption that child pathology explains problems of children. A need for an operational definition exists since children may be underachieving for other reasons than a learning disability. The critical need is to identify children who have "real" impairments in learning that cannot readily be overcome by minimum variations in the regular classroom instruction. The ACLD report states that the essential test of a disability rests in the amount of difficulty that a pupil has in learning when instructional principles are utilized.

The term "learning disabilities" will probably continue to mean a different variety of dysfunctions to different people, with accompanying incidence figures ranging anywhere from less than one percent to over twenty percent of the school-age population. Schools will also probably continue to include in this category children

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who are variously termed underachievers, emotionally or behaviorally disordered, or dull-normal pupils who are failing in school—none of which clearly fit under any other classification system in special education; such as mentally retarded, deaf, blind, etc.¹

This paper refers to the learning disabled child as described in the definition by Kirk in 1968 which describes children with special learning disorders as those who:

. . . exhibit a disorder in one or more the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written languages. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or to environmental disadvantage.²

**Exceptional Child**

The exceptional child is the child who deviates from the normal or average child in:

1. mental characteristics
2. sensory abilities
3. neuromuscular or physical characteristics

¹Ibid.

4. social or emotional behavior
5. communication abilities
6. multiple handicaps to such an extent that the child requires a modification of school practices or special education services in order to develop to maximum capacity.¹

This broad definition includes any child who deviates from the norm of his group and establishes many kinds of exceptionalities. References are made in this paper to the educable mentally retarded child (EMR) who also is referred to as the exceptional child.

**Special Class**

The special class is physically integrated into a regular school system and contains five to ten children who have been previously diagnosed as learning disabled. It is a total learning program which consists of modifications of or additions to school practices intended for the ordinary child, as well as special equipment not available to the regular classroom.² The special education techniques for remediation refer to educational planning based on diagnostic procedures and results, such as in the self-contained classroom also.

²Ibid.
Many special strategies and materials may be in the repertoire of the classroom teacher, but what makes them special is that they are called into use prescriptively by the special education teacher, who needs competence in analyzing the tasks which are difficult to learn, competence in analyzing a child's functional skills, competence in matching skills to tasks and patient encouragement.\textsuperscript{1}

Resource Room

The resource room teacher gives specialized instruction to a small group of learning disabled children on a scheduled basis in a resource room located in the regular school. The children are still enrolled in the regular classroom, but go to the resource room for periods ranging anywhere from twenty minutes to two to three hours, and for any specified number of days a week.\textsuperscript{2} It is a program that is very conducive to individualized prescriptive teaching.\textsuperscript{3} The resource teacher is a diagnostic-remediation specialist who evaluates abilities and disabilities of each child sent to her and offers remediation to a child

\textsuperscript{1}Diane Divoky, "Learning Disability 'Epidemic'," \textit{Journal of Learning Disabilities} 8 (May 1975).

\textsuperscript{2}S. A. Kirk, \textit{Educating Exceptional Children}.

one at a time or more if their disabilities are compatible.\(^1\)

The resource teacher also consults with the pupil's classroom teacher and other team members so that all who are working with a child are consistent in their efforts.\(^2\)

The classroom teacher continues to assume the major responsibility for all of the children assigned to her with supportive assistance from the resource teacher. The educational prescriptions prepared by the resource teacher are designed to be sufficiently clear and detailed to be carried out by any faculty who are not learning disability specialists.\(^3\)

There is immediate access to media and special materials, many of which are unique or expensive and difficult to obtain for a regular classroom teacher.\(^4\)

It is a middle ground approach to special and regular education and its aim is to avoid the stigmatism associated with labeling and segregating mildly handicapped children.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)Kirk, \textit{Educating Exceptional Children}, p. 67.


As many as twenty to thirty children can be served in a resource room daily, depending on the size of the groups and length of time for each period.

Limitations

Research was reviewed from 1965 to the present. The learning disabled child enrolled only in the elementary grades is discussed, with the exclusion of the other exceptional education categories, such as mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, etc. This paper basically evaluates the validity of the current trend of special self-contained placements in view of the psychological implications and the academic gains. There are a variety of alternatives to the special class placement, but only the comparative effectiveness of the resource room was analyzed.

Summary

Learning disabilities has produced numerous debatable and unanswered questions in special education with the special class placement probably being the most vital issue. There are extreme differences of opinions in regard to the merits of placement in a self-contained classroom which range from providing each child with his constitutional rights to the education which meets his unique needs to victimizing him with total disregard for his welfare while in a class set up as a convenience for the regular class teacher and the administration.
It is not denied that the learning disabled child does exist as a separate entity in special education and does require specific and special instruction geared toward his individual needs, but controversy is heightened by the increasing evidence which disproves the efficacy of special class placement, as well producing unexpected negative side-effects. There seems to be little regard for the total child in the educational pursuit to fulfill his educational needs, since social and psychological needs are totally ignored in the process of placing a child in a stigmatizing situation.

Special educators have never questioned the desirability of providing special services to handicapped children. The general tendency is to move away from a self-centered special class to a resource room, especially for the milder forms of handicaps. This middle ground approach is hopefully combining the best elements of both special and regular education. Its effectiveness also warrants research, and the validity of both the resource room and the special classroom were evaluated in this paper, in view of the academic gains and the emotional and social consequences of each.

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CHAPTER II

THE SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL CLASSROOM

Introduction

The question is asked, "Is discrimination in terms of special schools, smaller classes, better staffing ratios, additional materials and resources and special ancillary services for the handicapped defensible?"\(^1\) Despite the vagueness and the lack of validation of the special class, hundreds of thousands of children are being placed in special classes or programs.\(^2\)

Question of Homogeneity

Research questions the value of the special class and its assumption that children with similar learning disabilities learn best by being placed together.\(^3\) It was felt that homogeneous grouping would provide a sense of security and comfort by allowing the child to identify with

\(^{1}\)Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."

\(^{2}\)Schrag, The Myth of the Hyperactive Child.

other children with problems, rather than face the daily competition and failure that occur in the regular classroom. There is evidence, however, that group identification may be significantly related to a child's mental health, self-concept and societal conformity.\(^1\) The grouping technique frequently accentuates to a child that he is not only slower than other children, but actually different. Schrag and Divoky refer to it as a "qualitative difference in which millions of children are no longer regarded as part of the ordinary spectrum of human personality and intelligence."\(^2\)

Studies by Dunn with the educable mentally retarded give good evidence against the continued use of diagnostic practices and disability labels. Dunn claims that there is overwhelming evidence that our present and past practices have their major justifications in removing pressures from the regular class teacher and pupils, at the expense of the socio-culturally deprived slow learning pupils themselves. He contends that the homogeneous grouping tends to work to the disadvantage of the slow learner and underprivileged because such pupils learn much from being in the


same class with children with better cultural backgrounds and higher academic ability.\footnote{L. W. Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?" \textit{Exceptional Children} 38 (1968).} At a 1970 ACLD convention, Kephart stated that the child with a minor problem has much more to gain from interaction with his peers in the classroom than he has to gain from intensive activities in a segregated program.\footnote{Newell C. Kephart, "Reflections on Learning Disabilities: Its Contribution to Education," in \textit{Meeting Total Needs of Learning Disabled Children: A Forward Look}, John I. Arena, ed. (1970 Seventh Annual Conference; Selected Papers on Learning Disabilities) (Philadelphia: ACLD,1970).}

This intensive academic instruction is also questioned because it is reasoned that the learning disabled child has more fundamental and highly unique deficits which underlie problems with his school work.\footnote{Alex Bannatyne, "Diagnosing Learning Disabilities and Writing Remedial Prescriptions," \textit{Journal of Learning Disabilities} 4 (1968).} It is the consensus of most educators that deficit children do not constitute a homogeneous group in the nature or extent of their deficits, whether of intelligence, body schema, perceptual motor or language development.\footnote{Sapir, "Learning Disability and Deficit Centered Classroom Training," p. 663.} Sabatino states...
that there is no instructional homogeneity in most classes and that the children resemble a "box of assorted candies" because of the diversity of the children and their educational disability.\textsuperscript{1} He agrees that there are a few similarities in classes for the visually or hearing impaired, but calls the attempt to create a special class for these and other categorical types of handicapped children ludicrous when it is to be viewed as an all-encompassing learning center. Special classes have been referred to as "dumping grounds"\textsuperscript{2} which consist of a "grab bag of handicaps".\textsuperscript{3} It has been well acknowledged by many of the education experts that the learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and other educationally handicapped children are frequently and indiscriminately thrown together.\textsuperscript{4}

Sabatino believes that the fact that handicapped children cannot be homogeneously grouped on the basis of

\textsuperscript{1}D. A. Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."

\textsuperscript{2}Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."

\textsuperscript{3}Schrag, The Myth of the Hyperactive Child.

\textsuperscript{4}Divoky, "Learning Disability 'Epidemic'.
the instructionally irrelevant criteria seems unimportant to the administration.¹

**Individual Differences**

Factors given by Lerner that need to be considered in placement include the child's educational level, his behavior, his ability to maintain himself in groups, his chronological age, the individualization of instruction offered in the regular class of his school and his level of schooling.² However, a major issue of criticism of the public school system is that the child is not usually individually evaluated, but evaluated competitively, which ignores the varying social backgrounds and individual differences in ability.³ Children who suffer the most in school performance are those who work at the level of their ability but below the expected standards.⁴ Divoky

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¹ Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."


⁴ M. J. Shepherd, "Learning Disabled or Slow Learner?" *Teacher* (March 1975).
maintains that since disability is by definition a relative term, it is felt that when comparisons go, disabilities go.¹

In reply to Divoky's criticism of the learning disability movement, Barbara Keogh states that learning and behavioral problems need to be viewed as part of the range of individual differences within a normal population and it is necessary to recognize the importance of situational and programmatic influences which interact with children's characteristics and produce success or failure.² Keogh maintains that the boundary of what passes for normality is certainly limited when evaluating children and seeing every variation from established norms as a disability.

Bateman recommends grouping by patterns of cognitive abilities and teaching children in accord with known principles of learning.³ Balow has found that extremely few children have physiological problems that interfere with processing information and that if a child is awake and active he cannot avoid learning regardless of the grouping.⁴

¹Divoky, "Education's Latest Victim: The 'LD' Kid."
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴C. Ordando and J. Lynsh, "Learning Disability or Educational Casualties? Where Do We Go From Here?" Elementary School Journal 74 (May 1974).
Self-Contained Model

There is a model self-contained learning disability classroom in California which has gained recognition for its successful efforts to group an assortment of widely diverse disabled children. All labels or traditional disability categories were abolished and the classes were organized on the basis of levels of competencies in a developmental sequence. Children were never referred to by their specific handicap but by their level of placement, such as Preacademic I, Preacademic II, Academic I and Academic II. A regular class situation is simulated wherever possible, but highly individual work is prescribed. This "Madison Program" contends that the environment is labeled and not the child. Its aim is at organizing a simple educational program for all exceptional children while including the best of both worlds, the special and the regular. The claims of success should be examined, since there are many variables that need to be accounted for and many disadvantages still exist which are the result of special placement.


Behavioral Problems

It is not only the academic differences and individual deficits which create the melting pot effect of the special class, but many learning disabled students are more often referred to the learning disability program on account of their behavior than on account of poor achievement. Koppitz reports that some grossly misplaced children in learning disability classes are actually too disturbed or too impaired for the classes. It is said to be wasteful and self-defeating to fill up learning disability classes with children who cannot benefit from them. Some youngsters who cannot be controlled in the regular classes also cannot be managed in the learning disability classes and do not belong there. This type of child will be equally disruptive in a small setting and Koppitz states that it is futile to try to teach a thoroughly negativistic child who hates school and teachers and who is totally lacking in motivation for learning. It is believed that the youngster's attitude has to be changed first before he can begin to profit from any education.

Stigma and Self-Concept

Many special educators question the merits of a segregated classroom on the basis that it is stigmatizing

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2Ibid., p. 193.
to its subjects, in addition to it being less effective academically and being more expensive.\textsuperscript{1} It is the labeling and categorizing of children which has the most obvious implications and it is now receiving the increased attention and concern of special education.

Back in 1965, the studies of Dunn have given substantial evidence that special class placement for the educable mentally retarded pupils have resulted in self-derogation after one year.\textsuperscript{2} Dunn, who has supported and promoted special classes for the EMR for most of the past twenty years, has discovered from his own studies that removing a handicapped child from the regular grades for special education contributes significantly to his feelings of inferiority and problems of acceptance. The recent development of learning disability classes, however, is based on a limited appreciation of such findings and of special class effectiveness.\textsuperscript{3}

The practice of labeling and segregating persists in view of expert findings that the past and present diagnostic procedures in learning disability do indeed create labels that do more harm than good. They become more than just an implication of a child deficient in a specific learning skill,

\textsuperscript{1}Frank Warner, Robert Thrapp, Suzanne Walsh, "Attitudes of Children Toward Their Special Class Placement," Exceptional Children (September 1973).

\textsuperscript{2}Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of it Justifiable?"

\textsuperscript{3}Sabatino,"Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."
but suggest that he is generally, personally defective.\(^1\) Once the child's deviance is publicly acknowledged by his special placement, he begins to question his own self-worth and even his attitudes are decidedly depreciated.

In Rosenthal's study of the self-concept, he reports that a person with low self-esteem is extremely sensitive to any evidence in the experiences of his daily life which testify to his inadequacies or worthlessness.\(^2\) It is well acknowledged that the more positively a child feels about himself and his status as a student the more he will achieve.\(^3\) In a very extensive study across grade levels, the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept for normal learners has been established.\(^4\) Educational psychologists are in general agreement that human ability is not the most important factor in achievement, but that it is the student's attitudes that actually limit his level


\(^3\)I. J. Semler, "Relationships Among Several Measures of Pupil Adjustment," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 51 (1960).

of achievement. This is based on the theory that intellectual capacity is controlled by the student's belief in himself. It has been proven in the numerous experiments and surveys by Coopersmith that the self-concept of ability is a better predictor of success than achievement tests.

Many times a student's self-concept suffers from some vague fear or anxiety, blown up out of all proportion and nothing does so much harm as having a problem totally unlike anyone else's. McCandless states that the most important aspect of the self-concept is whether or not the child likes himself and can accept himself without trying to prove he is what he is not. It is important, therefore, that educational intervention techniques maintain and enhance the self-concept of each individual child. Exposure to appropriate teaching strategies for each child's particular learning style will increase the

1Purkey, Self-Concept and School Achievement.


possibility that he will conceive himself as a successful learner. The basic question of whether a child sees himself negatively because of his poor school performance or whether he performs poorly in school because he sees himself negatively is still unresolved.

The efforts on the part of special educators to gain insight into the feelings of children for whom special education programs were designed has been minimal. It is strongly felt that if there was no stigma and special placement were free and clear of any negative social implications, that many students would really prefer the more flexible and less academically demanding curricula of the special class. Special education placement is based on the assumption that the elimination of competition with children of average and above average ability will screen out the problems of the disability and promote educational progress. The child has been spared the competitive

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2 Purkey, *Self-Concept and School Achievement*.

3 Warner, et al. "Attitudes of Children Toward Their Special Class Placement."

4 Towne, "Some Latent Functions of Special Placement."
atmosphere of the regular classroom and he may even feel somewhat better about school, but he most likely will not feel better about himself.¹

**Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

In the school's failure to meet the affective needs of children in special classes one can also recognize the unawareness of the important principle in learning called the self-fulfilling prophecy. Since group identification with the learning disabled threatens to change the way people see a child,² the child will react with the behavior he believes is expected of him. Studies have proven that labeling a child handicapped reduces the teacher's expectancies for him to succeed.³ "The student's inept performance of an important task will be explained by defining him as part of the subset who is supposed to behave that way by definition."⁴ Deviant behavior is both expected and legitimate. Teachers are actually indirectly encouraging failure by the very fact that they have little confidence in a particular child.⁵

¹Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Children."
²Kronick, "Some Thoughts on Group Identification--Social Needs."
⁴Towne, "Some Latent Functions of Special Placement."
⁵Purkey, Self-Concept and School Achievement.
Brookover's conception of learning relates the steps in which students are affected by the expectations of others.¹ The self-fulfilling prophecy is the basis of his principles as well as the negative effect of a poor self-concept. Anchored to the child's self-concept is the public acknowledgement of his incapabilities, and it is said that once a student defines himself as unable to learn, particularly in areas of academic behavior, he will not attempt to learn. Regardless of accuracy or correctness, the child's course of action will be directed by his own inner feelings and interpretations of the expectations of others. Even the best remedial program is jeopardized when the student learns that he cannot learn and the task of the teacher becomes extremely difficult when dealing with a pupil who has a firmly established low self-image.

Social Aspects

Sabatino states that the problems of the learning disabled child are not any more pressing than any other special program but he confirms that the more basic issue requiring immediate consideration by educators is the fact that the exceptional child is isolated from the mainstream of education.² Although a special class is physically

¹ Brookover, "Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement."

integrated in a school system it may simultaneously be socially isolated and so unduly emphasize the exceptional child's deviation. ¹ Little energy is also being devoted to studying the social aspects of special programs for the learning disabled. ² If part of the remediation plan involves placing a child in a special class, a social act takes place which bears upon the success of the program. ³ The social aspect involved with education is identified as an important nonintellectual factor associated with special class placement. ⁴

Research indicates that a child's classmates have great consequences for the child's intellectual, emotional and social development. ⁵ Kirk admits that it is unfortunate that many handicapped children in self-contained classes have been denied sufficient contact with other children. ⁶ The segregated

¹ Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children, p. 32.
² Towne, "Some Negative Implications of Special Placement for Children with Learning Disabilities."
³ Ibid.
⁵ Yamamoto, The Child and His Image.
social togetherness contrived by others is just another means of suggesting to the child that not only is he incapable of learning with other children, but that he also is not allowed to play with normal children, or even capable of doing so.¹

With the implementation of new special classes, educators fail to consider the implication that learning disabled children value normal attributes and that being identified primarily with other disabled children may serve as a reminder of attributes with which they would prefer not being connected.² Towne and Joiner in 1968, have done a thorough study on the social implications of the self-contained classroom in an effort to induce special educators to take a second look at special class placement since it has been proven that one's peers exert a large influence upon learning.³

In a very recent study, intelligence has been shown to be related to popularity ratings. Reasons were not entirely clear for the rejection by peers, but the evidence indicated that the social status of the learning disabled

¹Kronick, "Some Thoughts on Group Identification--Social Needs."

²Ibid.

³Towne, "Some Negative Implications of Special Placement for Children with Learning Disabilities."
children was dependent also on variables such as the race and sex of the child. Biological differences also must be accounted for and findings may support the premise that lack of peer popularity is not a question of intelligence, labeling or expectancy, but rather a symptom of learning disability.\(^1\) Findings do dictate that there is a need for educational programs which have social affective components as well as cognitive achievement goals.

**Regular Classroom**

Empirical studies have not been established conclusively that the use of special classes for learning disabled children instead of the regular classroom has resulted in improved academic achievement.\(^2\) In some special classes, the learning disability program has helped children to use their mental ability to the fullest so they functioned better and appeared brighter, but this did not imply an actual increase in intelligence.\(^3\)

Studies which have heightened the controversy about the academic efficacy have been those done with the mildly retarded pupil.\(^4,5\)

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\(^3\) Koppitz, *Children with Learning Disabilities.*

\(^4\) Affleck, "Expanding the Resource Concept: The Resource School."

\(^5\) Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of it Justifiable?"
Failure of the special education classes for retarded children to show significant academic efficiency has prompted the special educators to re-evaluate their educational value.\(^1\) Despite small enrollment in self-contained special classes and specially trained teachers, the many moderately handicapped children in special classes do not do as well as their regular class counterparts.\(^2\) In fact, there is research evidence that has shown that handicapped children actually learn less with trained teachers, small, segregated classes and special materials than when integrated into a large class with a regular teacher and classmates years ahead of them.\(^3\)

Efficacy studies by Dunn found consistently that both retarded and emotionally disturbed pupils make as much or more progress in the regular grades as they do in a special class.\(^4\) The belief that special education classes can be justified on the basis of smaller classes and specialized

\(^1\)Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."
\(^2\)Carroll, "The Effects of Segregated and Partially Integrated School Programs on Self-Concept and Academic Achievement of Educable Mentally Retarded."
\(^3\)Larry Molloy, "The Handicapped Child in the Everyday Classroom," Phi Delta Kappan 56 (January 1975).
\(^4\)Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"
instruction is a rationalization, says Sabatino. The review of research shows mixed results of the effects of special class placement on the achievement and self-perception of handicapped children, but the generalized finding is that retarded children do not function as well academically in special classes as do matched groups performing in regular class settings. Whether this can be generalized to include the learning disabled child has not been conclusively established by research, but only deduced from the existing facts resulting from the current special class placements. Many learning problems cannot even be diagnosed accurately because the basic difficulties are so closely interwoven with motivational problems.

It is well agreed that severe and extensive learning disabilities are best dealt with in a segregated classroom.

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1 Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."


3 Purkey, Self-Concept and School Achievement.

4 Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms."

5 Ordando, "Learning Disability or Educational Casualties? Where Do We Go From Here?"


7 Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children.
Kephart believes that a large number of learning disabled children can be handled adequately within the regular classroom environment since their problems do not set them off from their peers sufficiently to warrant more drastic measures.

**Academic Considerations**

Some educators contend that the learning disabled child would be happier in the special class by avoiding the humiliation of the regular class, but that the special class programs are not academically oriented. It was suggested that the special class retain the learning orientation of a regular classroom coupled with the best psychological sort of support and remedial help. The majority of the new approaches devised within the past few years are said to be intended for use in the regular classroom and not in the classroom for children with learning disability. A major criterion which disproved the academic efficacy of special class placement for the mildly retarded was that no specification of curriculum or methodology was presented.

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1. Blum, "Madison Plan as an Alternative to Special Class Placement."
Despite the popularity of prescriptive teaching and learning disability specialists the evidence for the success of the instructional approach has been rather limited.¹ Some educators contend that most classroom teachers are not equipped to devise special materials for individual needs, nor are they trained to use special materials that may be available.² Among the accusations that special education is not really so special is the belief that the materials or methods used in the program are usually diluted versions of the general education curriculum and in spite of low pupil-teacher ratio as compared to the regular classroom, the special class offers little if any individual instruction.³

Brookover adds insight to the prescriptive teaching techniques with the understanding that when a child's tasks differ considerably from typical academic tasks the child may react negatively to them by perceiving them as tasks for those who are too dumb to understand the regular school work.⁴

¹Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."


³Ordando, "Learning Disability or Educational Casualties? Where Do We Go From Here?"

⁴Brookover, "Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement."
After a five-year follow-up study of learning disabled pupils in the special class, Koppitz stated that the learning disability class did help some children to overcome their learning problems sufficiently to return to the regular classroom, and also served to free the regular classes of disruptive pupils which in many cases prevented an increase or development of emotional and behavior problems in many youngsters.¹ More recent developments of special classes for children with learning disabilities have limited comprehensive evaluation of their effectiveness.² There is sufficient evidence listed by Dunn which gives reason to find better ways of serving children with mild learning disorders than placing them in self-contained special classes.³

Divoky suggests that we need to search for alternatives when we meet failure and not resort to excuses. Keogh questions whether there is the ideal program and states that the heterogeneity of the group of children with serious learning problems may well require a variety of program options. She states that our task is to provide the necessary evidence which will discover appropriate

¹Koppitz, *Children with Learning Disabilities.*


³Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"
choices for each child's learning endeavor. In response to Divoky's harsh condemnation that the learning disabled child is labeled, counted but not necessarily treated, Keogh replies that there is little doubt that many children are ill served by their educational program but that learning disability came about because a significant number of children are unable to perform adequately in the existing education system.\(^1\) Children with learning disabilities seemingly do not profit from repeated exposure in the regular classes and need something extra, whether in the way of behavior modification, prescriptive teaching or emotional support.\(^2\)

Koppitz's studies indicated positively that many children with learning disabilities could never succeed in regular education, even with repeating the same grade several times.\(^3\) If, on the other hand, any learning disabled child were able to overcome a particular handicap with only one or two years of special education at the elementary school level, his problems could have probably been dealt with by means of a modified schedule in the regular class or with the help of a resource room.

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\(^1\) Divoky, "Learning Disability 'Epidemic'."


\(^3\) Koppitz, *Children with Learning Disabilities*, p. 90.
Integration

Both Dunn and Sabatino declare that a moratorium be placed on special education classes and, therefore, remove legal administrative and medical labels and structures which force us to depend upon categorical programming. In all cases, placement should be considered as tentative, since the learning disability programs were specifically designed to be remedial and the whole purpose was to return to the mainstream.

Barsch firmly is against the idea of classes for learning disabilities as full segregated units set apart from the rest of education. He suggests that if they are to be developed they should be organized on the premise that the child is going to return to the mainstream of his particular educational program.

Sabatino states that even if the special self-contained classroom had proven to be effective in remediating the learning problems of the learning disabled children enrolled in them, it is doubtful that the school systems

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1 Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"

2 Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."


could provide enough space or funding anyway to place large numbers of children with learning disabilities into special classes. ¹

The token addition of remedial personnel and the useful strategies simply are not enough to accommodate the number of children who require special teaching or learning situations. ² McCarthy feels that with such a high incidence of learning disability, as indicated by research studies, the problem cannot be solved with special class placement, whether it be a self-contained classroom or a resource program. She feels that the solution must involve the only professional group available in sufficient numbers to public schools, such as the regular teacher. ³

Dunn also refers to the need of a total education wherein general education would continue to have central responsibility for the vast majority of the children with mild learning disabilities, but also recommended the route of the resource teacher to devise effective prescriptions and to tutor the learning disability students. ⁴

¹ Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."

² Vellutino, "New Direction or Swinging Pendulum?"


⁴ Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"
Because of the lack of clear evidence of special class effectiveness, laws in many states are now requiring that, whenever possible, handicapped children be integrated into an everyday classroom alongside regular students.\textsuperscript{1} The social issues also contributed to this shift in education of mainstreaming.\textsuperscript{2} However, this integration is still an administration or organizational solution and recent research indicates complex social and personal responses to it.\textsuperscript{3}

It was determined, however, that even with mainstreaming the negative psychological and social problems are not much improved since the stigma is still attached due to basically being a member of the special classroom. Although the initiation of the mainstreaming concept has led to the creation of individual personalized programs capable of serving a wide variety of academic levels,\textsuperscript{4} it still maintains dependence on a categorical label which is only assumed to be appropriately applied.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}Molloy, "The Handicapped Child in the Everyday Classroom."
\textsuperscript{2}Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."
\textsuperscript{3}Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."
\textsuperscript{4}Molloy, "The Handicapped Child in the Everyday Classroom."
\textsuperscript{5}Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."
Non-Categorical Trend

Since education today cannot be content with merely teaching and must be concerned with the total development of each and every pupil, educationally, socially, and emotionally education has entered into a new era of non-categorical approaches toward exceptional children. \(^1\) A non-categorical resource room is an instructional setting where any child who is experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties may be assigned for a designated period, possibly daily. \(^3\)

It is believed that the trend to segregate children needing special educational services into isolated, intact programs is reversing for the learning disabled child. \(^4\) Resource rooms are serving as a compromise between total segregation and no special services at all. Lerner states that highly trained professionals will serve as diagnosticians who will plan the teaching program and implement the teaching plan. \(^5\) They will serve as consultants to the

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\(^1\) McCarthy, "Providing Services in the Public Schools for Children with Learning Disabilities."


\(^3\) Walker, "Non-Categorical Resource Room: Its Impact on Special and Regular Education."

\(^4\) Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."

regular classroom teacher and will provide a liaison between various specialists, teachers and parents.

Resource rooms and model programs will be discussed in the following chapter with reference to ways that they may better meet the total needs of children and also provide a practical solution to the many educational problems caused by the self-contained classroom. The teacher's role as a learning resource specialist will also be compared to the role of the learning disability teacher in a self-contained classroom.

**Summary**

The self-contained classroom has been referred to as the least effective educational program for the learning disabled child. There is a general consensus of opinion that the special class cannot be homogeneously grouped, and as a result the class has become a "dumping ground" for children who do not meet the standards of the regular class.

A major area of criticism has been due to increased evidence that group identification may be significantly related to a child's mental health, self-concept and societal conformity. The negative academic, psychological and social implications of the self-contained classroom have been shown in numerous experiments with the mildly mentally retarded, and yet special classes are still being implemented for the learning disabled.
The resource room is quickly becoming the current trend in the field of learning disabilities, but this alternative also raises questions that need to be answered.
CHAPTER III
THE RESOURCE ROOM

Rationale

Resource rooms for children with problems are not new, but they exist without guidelines or standards and are subject to a variety of interpretations about their real functions and effectiveness. Resource programs have been developed as a flexible supporting system to provide for the student's educational needs by replacing sole reliance on segregated classes.\(^1\) The rationale for the learning resource system is based on the "instructional technology to provide a more systematic way of designing, carrying out and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching in terms of specific objectives, based on research in human learning and communication, and employing a combination of human and non-human resources to bring about more effective instruction".\(^2\)

Studies and the development of regional resource centers found that it is not productive to remove a child

\(^1\)Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."

\(^2\)Lance, "Learning Resource Systems for Special Education."
from his own school and that the necessary diagnosis and treatment can occur without such action.1 Sabatino cites many of the merits of the resource programs and believes that in their many forms they may be a first step toward developing a continuum of special instructional environments.2 Initially, the basic concept underlying the resource center program was based on the fundamental premise that the teacher of handicapped children needed help. The focus was on instructional materials which was only a first step and put the teacher center-stage.3 Moss gives several clearly identifying features of the resource room. It is:

1. Primarily a service to teachers and not to children.

2. Children will be enrolled in the center for short periods only for the purpose of diagnosis and program development.

3. When children leave the center, they leave with an educational program which has been developed specifically for them.

4. Service of the center will be available to all teachers experiencing problems with children.4

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2 Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."

3 Moss, "Resource Centers for Teaching of Handicapped Children."

4 Ibid.
Educational Continuum

The resource room program attempts to show specific ways all teachers can provide appropriate instruction for more children since "the instructional technology includes a greater array of appraisal and prescriptive procedures, some unique intervention strategies and required specialized materials suited to the needs of learners with sensory, mental, social and other handicaps." The resource room does not attempt to promote child stereotypes, but rather an understanding of the child's uniqueness and the international nature of children's problems.

Clark maintains that the resource room bridges the gap between the broadbased unit curriculum of the pre-1960 era and the premium of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching. She illustrates how a learning center could make the diagnostic prescriptive process immediately available to teachers by blending the skills of the master teacher and a school psychologist as a team. This is in agreement with many other educators and with Sabatino's statement that what should be special about special education is a continuum.

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1 Lance, "Learning Resource Systems for Special Education."

2 Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"

of teaching environments that permits special educators from all the different areas (speech, remedial reading, etc.) to focus on handicapped children.\(^1\) A vital ingredient for a resource room program is continuous in-service training for the teaching staff, especially for the first year, such as a half-day per week.\(^2\)

On the surface, the resource room programs appear to confront directly the two prevalent concerns raised by the self-contained programs.

1. Since the children served in a resource room still attend the regular classes most of the day, the stigma that may result from segregation should be diminished.

2. Also, since resource programs reduce teacher-pupil ratio, they should enhance the potential for highly individualized programming, resulting in increased student achievement.\(^3\)

Results of studies showed that some children with learning disabilities need the total teaching structure provided by a full day's work in a special class. However, the majority of children with learning disabilities achieved as well with daily visits of short duration to the resource room as a matched group in special classes.\(^4\) A resource

\(^1\) Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."

\(^2\) Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"

\(^3\) Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms."

\(^4\) Sabatino, An Evaluation of Resource Rooms for Children with Learning Disabilities."
room is specifically designed to deal with children with moderate problems, whose interference with learning is such that many of the activities in the regular classroom become meaningless for them and they need more intensive assistance than the classroom teacher can be expected to provide.¹

The resource room can be an alternative to special class placement or it can be the alternative to no special assistance at all, but it is a general consensus that it is not a total substitution for the special class approach.²,³ It has been established that the self-contained classroom is still needed for the severely handicapped.⁴ Koppitz states that some pupils are so poorly controlled that a protective special class is required at least part of each day all the way through high school, even though their achievement may be satisfactory.⁵

Many educators maintain that all exceptional children should have some group or class placement as a part of

¹Kephart, "Reflections on Learning Disabilities: Its Contribution to Education."

²Valett, "Learning Resource Center for Exceptional Children."

³Roger Reger and Marion Koppmann, "Child Oriented Resource Room Program," Exceptional Children 37 (February 1971).

⁴Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"

⁵Koppitz, Children with Learning Disabilities.
their educational therapy with the resource program as a supplement and including counseling services.¹ Sabatino advocates that every child should have the opportunity to visit a prognostic learning center for at least an hour each day for at least a six week initial assessment period so that meaningful instructional goals may be established and a set of meaningful intervention and educational materials can be developed.²

This is not to include only special education children and the new emphasis is to include all of the educationally needy and not just the retarded.³ The resource room support system should include a broad cross-section of children. For children who constitute the larger number of handicapped children, it is preferable to enroll them in the regular grades to provide special education for their specific deficiency or individual tutoring via the resource room.⁴

**Advantages**

There have been very encouraging results of such flexible school structures which emphasize non-categorization.⁵

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¹Valett, "Learning Resource Center for Exceptional Children."

²Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."

³Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."

⁴Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children.

⁵Walker, "Non-Categorical Resource Room: Its Impact on Special and Regular Education."
Within the framework of the resource room where categorical labels were eliminated, the stigma of special education placement was greatly reduced.\(^1\) The successful experiences provided in the resource center setting tend to enhance self-esteem and self-image.\(^2\) There are significant findings on such factors as social behavior and academic gains in reading and arithmetic also.\(^3\) In one of the studies to determine the efficacy of the resource room, it was revealed that the children, both handicapped and non-handicapped, when utilizing the resource room, improved in a five month period as a result of resource room instruction.\(^4\)

However, the social behavior while in the regular classroom was not different from the control students in these studies since it was realized that the conditions in the regular class must be changed to support the behavior learned in the resource room. It was concluded that behavioral changes were not brought about by the limited contact between the resource room staff and the regular class

\(^1\) Affleck, et al., "Expanding the Resource Concept: The Resource School."


\(^4\) Walker, "Non-Categorical Resource Room: Its Impact on Special and Regular Education."
teacher because the resource room model did not provide the necessary strategies to modify behavior.¹

Behavior modification is a very active part of special education and the learning resource center. It is felt that the resource teacher should prescribe a behavior modification program combined with the remediation approach which the regular teacher can adopt or adapt in the regular classroom setting.²

**Identifying Features**

The benefits derived from enrollment in a resource room rather than full-time placement in the special self-contained class are reviewed briefly here:

1. Children are assigned to regular classes and, therefore, can easily stay within the school's mainstream. In a special self-contained class, any involvement by the regular class teacher, such as integration for reading, tends to represent an additional burden to the regular class teacher. In the resource room, it is the other way around and the regular teacher is being helped by the special teacher, while the regular teacher is still in charge.³

1Glavin, "Follow-up Behavioral Research in Resource Rooms."


3Reger, "Child Oriented Resource Room Program."
2. There is a larger perspective in relation to the children and the teaching staff, since interactions and common bonds develop with more people.¹

3. Preventive measures can be taken before minor problems develop into full scale problems. Through the resource room a specific deficit could be alleviated or compensated for which is an obstacle to the acquisition of language and conceptual skills.²

4. Disability diagnoses or labels are not necessary for placement when there is no administrative need to sort groups and since the child is kept in the mainstream of education there is no stigma attached.³,⁴

5. Segregation is avoided and pupils can still be kept with their peers.⁵

6. At least one resource room can be set up in most elementary schools and pupils can receive help in their neighborhood school.⁶

¹Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"


³Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"

⁴Walker, "Non-Categorical Resource Room: Its Impact on Special and Regular Education."

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.
7. The flexible scheduling can meet the needs of changing situations and individual needs of children.¹

8. Teacher referrals of special needs of children can receive immediate attention since there is no appreciable time lapse.²

9. Resource rooms are less expensive to operate than special class programs and even for the same money more children can be served in a resource room than in the special class.³

10. Parents of children with problems are much more ready to accept a resource room placement than a self-contained class and are happier. They, therefore, are more willing to become involved and support the program and also participate in parent education classes.⁴, ⁵

11. A skilled director could coordinate an in-service training program and the staff could learn through and be stimulated by one another.⁶

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Valett, "Learning Resource Center for Exceptional Children."
⁵Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"
⁶Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"
The amount of time spent in the resource room is recommended by the resource room teacher and is dependent upon severity of the disability. It is felt that if a child is considered to need placement in the resource room for more than two or at most three hours per day, the child is misplaced and should be considered for a self-contained classroom.\(^1\) Some feel that twenty minutes is just about the attention span of most children and that about a half-hour session every day would provide greater carry-over instructionally than one hour sessions twice or even three times a week.\(^2\)

It is generally agreed that by keeping a child enrolled in the regular class and receiving special help, more children can be provided the opportunity to overcome handicaps than in a self-contained class since by state law the self-contained class would be extremely limited in enrollment.\(^3\) Size of enrollment can vary depending on the resource teacher's program; and usually may consist of a caseload of twenty-one to twenty-five pupils per week. It is suggested that no more than three or at maximum four children should be with the teacher at any one time.\(^4\)

\(^1\)Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"
The learning resource teacher's services are available, however, to all classroom teachers for consultation and recommendations. The learning resource specialist also serves on the team for referral and selection of pupils and reports pupil performance.

Self-Contained Teacher Versus Resource Specialist

While the basic duties of the self-contained classroom teacher and the resource room teacher are fundamentally the same as far as appraising, programming for individualized instruction, adapting material, etc., the responsibility for instructional planning within the special self-contained class is almost exclusively the teacher's.

In the resource room the teacher is aided in her educational planning by a variety of professional help. Sabatino states that "the special class may be more aptly described as an instructional nightmare in which a single teacher is expected to perform an impossible task." He also argues that the dream of individualized instruction for each child in a special self-centered classroom is too frequently a nightmare of hyperactivity, emotional reactions and chronic failures and parental guilt and denial. He blames this on the impossibility and not the challenge of

1Lewis, "A Resource Room Program for Learning Disabled Pupils,"

2Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."
establishing instructional goals, developing curricula and preparing materials for a class of eight or more handicapped children. Moss also refers to the challenge of the special education teacher as an impossible task due to the expectations of the teacher to be all things to all children. He claims that a teacher with eight to fifteen children in a class cannot manage such a program. There is no time for all of the preparation which must precede each hour of instruction. Demands made upon teachers of the handicapped today permit survival to be the criterion for success with effective teaching a hoped for by-product. In today's system this is more truth than exaggeration and Moss states that this accounts for a great deal of disillusionment with teachers in special classes.

An important and perhaps absolute feature that is attributed to resource room programs is the provision of one-to-one instruction. One-to-one instruction could be attained by limiting resource programs to the same membership that state departments have adopted for self-contained programs, e.g., twelve to fifteen for the EMR or eight to twelve for LD or ED. It has been established that limited enrollment in the special class alone does not necessarily improve instruction and Sabatino refers to the

1Moss, "Resource Centers for Teaching of Handicapped Children."

2Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms."
impossibility of one teacher giving individualized work for any more than four children. He claims that no teacher, even one equipped with the best methods and materials, can individualize work for five, ten or fifteen children since there is no instructional homogeneity of categorically defined handicapped children.\(^1\) The resource room program provides at least four specialists to guide the educational therapy while the special self-contained classroom teacher has the sole responsibility of all four jobs.\(^2\)

Kirk explains the need to train a new kind of special educator, which he calls a Diagnostic Remedial Specialist, who is responsible for the treatment of remediation prescribed by other disciplines. He claims that until we have a sufficient number of these diagnostic remediation specialists who can help the classroom teacher with not merely blueprints but tools with which to work, and who can supervise others, the field of learning disabilities is severely handicapped.\(^3\)

A practical and inexpensive solution suggested by Jenkins consists of changing the role of the teacher to that

\(^1\)Sabatino, "Resource Rooms: The Renaissance in Special Education."


\(^3\)Kirk, "Reflections on Learning Disabilities: Its Contribution to Education."
of instructional manager. As such, the resource teacher would not instruct small, "homogeneous" groups, but train and manage tutors who provide one-to-one instruction in resource room settings. There is evidence that children learn more from a cross-age tutor than in a small group.¹

The Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) reports numerous successful resource room programs. All have the major finding that the resource room, or individual and small group instruction have been academically superior over regular instruction or special class placement.²

The rapid expansion of special class programs led to the search for an alternative to special classes and numerous model resource room programs now exist throughout the country. One successful school in Washington converted completely into a resource school and children included normal to handicapped within grades kindergarten to six. The operation consisted of administration changes and required a complex interaction among the personnel. The reorganization of the entire school was placed around the resource concept. This extension of the resource concept led to a significant increase in reading performance of handicapped children participating in the study.³ Also,

¹Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms."
²Education Research Information Center (ERIC), see bibliography.
³Affleck, "Expanding the Resource Concept: The Resource School."
through the flexible scheduling, a large number of young non-handicapped students exhibiting deficits in academic skills were successfully served, adding the preventive aspect to the program.

Models

Eight model programs funded by the Bureau for the Handicapped are widely recognized for their great success and are representative of the types of education approaches to learning disabilities that hold promise, both in terms of possible educational results and fiscal feasibility. No one program was considered to be the best or only approach, but the successes of all were based on the following assumptions:

1. Educational approaches that permit the child to remain in the regular classroom a maximum amount of the time (full time is favored) are the most desirable.
2. Educational approaches that involve parents in a very real sense are more successful.
3. Highly trained educational specialists are required, no matter what program is utilized.
4. Additional, specific in-service training of the regular classroom teacher is essential.¹

The underlying theory on which the resource center is based is that a learning disability concept that leads only to labeling is of little value in determining techniques

¹Gearheart, Learning Disabilities--Educational Strategies, pp. 175-186.
that are appropriate to remedy each child's unique educational deficiencies.¹

Another study, an eight month program for the remediation of learning disabilities in eleven children ranging in age from seven to eleven resulted in social and academic progress. The basis of the program consisted of maintaining the child with learning disability in the regular educational program, while at the same time providing specialized professional help for the area of disability.² Utilizing the ITPA, results showed improvement in all of the subtests. Although there were significant gains in arithmetic and perceptual performance, there was a delayed reaction in reading which was attributed to the fact that reading is a far more complex process than arithmetic computation.

Another model program with favorable reaction in New York had several unique features such as employing teachers only; no psychologists, social workers or medical personnel were involved. The program consisted of evaluation and pinpointing deficits involving a basic perceptual motor skill and similar fundamental area.³ No diagnostic labels were used; no recommendations nor placements given. The center

¹Ibid.

²Ferinden, "A Supplemental Instructional Program for Children with Learning Disabilities."

³Reger, "Child Oriented Resource Room Program."
also helped children from the regular classes, who were seen by the center's staff of teachers three days a week.

Creative learning centers, as resource units, also have proved effective by providing a stimulating environment for the children selected. Hillerich proposes centers to promote interest in learning and self-confidence with the elimination of failure.¹ The children were encouraged to explore, and teachers were present only to encourage but not directly teach. No desks, textbooks, worksheets, etc. were used. Instead of the traditional materials, typewriters, taperecorders, language masters and other various, interesting hardware were used.

When these children who were served in a stimulating environment, were compared to control groups they differed considerably in their self-concept, initiative and degree of creativity.² Results in academic areas were not conclusive at the time of the report, but were expected to be significant.

Specifics on the resource room, teacher responsibilities, administration, interrelationships, etc., can be found in Reger's "What is a Resource Room Program?"³

²Ibid.
³Reger, "What is a Resource Room Program?"
A brief description can be found in Senate Report No. 726. The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, Office of Education, has the enabling legislation and it is said that they will now move quickly to implement the resource program whenever appropriations become available. Components of the resource idea do exist in many school settings, but the total reality is a program which will be slow in moving because of the general unavailability of staffs. The staffing consists basically of teachers; educational programmers who will be responsible for the coordination, management and planning; psychologists and education diagnosticians; media and materials specialists; curriculum development specialists; consultants who will study and evaluate the problems as they are manifest in the local schools; auxiliary personnel, such as speech or language therapists; research specialists to study and record the learning characteristics of the children in relation to the approaches tried.

Summary

Studies to date have indicated that the resource room is an excellent educational intervention for the learning disabled. It offers numerous advantages which include allowing the child to remain in the mainstream of education.

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1Moss, "Resource Centers for Teaching of Handicapped Children."
with his peers and still obtain highly individualized teaching. The resource room also diminishes the stigma that may result from segregation and has the benefit of more personalized programming due to the better teacher-pupil ratio. The number of children served in the resource room is greater than that of the self-contained classroom.

Severely disabled or disturbed children will still require a self-contained classroom, but the resource room will be especially practical for not only handicapped children but for all children who are educationally needy. Programming incorporates the cooperation and interaction of the classroom teacher, who has the major responsibility of the learning disabled child, and the resource specialist. A number of other disciplines are involved in planning the appropriate procedures to meet a child's academic and social needs.

Specific academic gains have been reported in the framework of the non-categorical resource room. Eight model programs, funded by the Bureau for the Handicapped, are successfully leading the way for future resource programs throughout the country. However, at this time, limited appropriations and general unavailability of staffs are limiting the number of resource rooms.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Summary of Facts

It was generally agreed upon that all children cannot be accommodated within general education no matter how flexibly organized.¹

Although there is broad dissatisfaction with many of the traditional grouping techniques, the fact still remains that the learning disabled child does need a slower pace of learning and more individual help than he can receive in a large regular class. Since the learning problems of learning disabled children, though more complex, are similar to those of many normal children for whom similar programming may be desirable,² it would follow that segregation and self-contained classrooms create an exceptionality that need not exist or may exaggerate one that does.

¹Budoff, "Providing Special Education Without Special Classes."

²J. D. Dunsing, "Learning Disabilities: Art, Science, or Witchcraft? or Let's Save Baby After the Wash!" Academic Therapy 8 (Summer 1973).

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Although conclusive research in the area of learning disabilities is still incomplete, it is unfortunate that the sound evidence from past comprehensive studies, made by such educational experts as Dunn, have had so little effect on the implementation of more self-contained classes, only this time for learning disabled children instead of retarded. Other authorities in the field of special education have also concluded, as Dunn, that the self-contained classroom is more damaging to a child's self-concept than the academic gains are worth. The principle that negative self-concepts should be prevented is almost completely ignored by many schools.¹

Further studies also have proven that in many cases there actually were not any academic gains, and yet, expensive, self-contained classrooms in large numbers do exist all over the country for the sake of children who are not benefitting from them. It is generally agreed that the initial disadvantages of the self-contained classroom exist as an overlay of the negative self-concept and the inadequate social situation. Some children have actually already failed before they even open a book.

It was back in 1965 that Dunn declared that much of our past and present practices are morally and educationally wrong. It appears that no one remembers or heard of this,

¹Purkey, *Self-Concept and School Achievement*. 
since a decade later, education is still doing the very thing he condemned then. He rightfully stated then that educators were "ill prepared and ineffective in educating handicapped children" and suggested that "we stop being pressured into continuing and expanding a special education program that we know from experience to be undesirable for many of the children that we are dedicated to serve."¹

The exceptional child for whom Dunn sought a more appropriate education has begun to win his place of acceptance in the regular class, but now a new crusade demands proper education also for the recently recognized learning disabled child. There is a dire need in special education for more appropriate programming which includes creative and specially prescribed instruction, since research indicates that the self-contained classroom may be the least satisfactory program for exceptional children.² Since the social aspect has been proven to have such a high priority it is necessary that the education programming meet children's social needs with the same sophistication that one approaches remediation.³

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¹Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"

²Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children.

³Kronick, "Some Thoughts on Group Identification--Social Needs."
Resource Room

It is the consensus of opinion that it is necessary to keep open communication lines between the special program and the regular program. The prevailing approach in the field of education is the regular class placement with supportive services. As a model for intervention that can be used statewide, Gearheart maintains in concurrence with many other researchers in the field of education, that the resource room is an excellent one.¹

The resource room could serve as a bridge, at least tentatively, until further research can be made between the ineffective and inappropriate special classroom and the equally inadequate regular class. This non-categorical approach warrants good consideration since it relies neither on a psychometric test nor classification. The advantage of such an approach is that the emphasis is on labeling the learning problem and identifying the appropriate teaching strategy rather than on labeling and categorizing the child.¹

While the resource room will absorb the moderately handicapped children, special classes will increasingly become instructional settings for the truly handicapped, who

¹Gearheart, Learning Disabilities--Educational Strategies, p. 165.

are the children for whom the classes were originally intended. Generally, children with severe learning disabilities are in a self-contained, special class in a regular school but the preferable alternative for most learning disabled children with milder disabilities is still to provide as near to a normal school setting as possible.

**Search for Solution**

The many good suggestions of Dunn to do away with the many existing disability labels and the present practice of grouping children homogeneously by their labels into special classes have gone mainly unheeded by the learning disability field. Instead of keeping the learning disabled children in the mainstream of education and utilizing special services such as the resource room, the majority of today's handicapped children are further handicapped by the humiliation of being segregated, in addition to being subjected to inadequate instruction. There is no doubt that with the current description of the learning disabled child, many children will fit into this category to some degree.

Whether or not the resource room is the answer to the self-contained classroom is actually of little importance when it is estimated that the number of learning

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1 Walker, "Non-Categorical Resource Room: Its Impact on Special and Regular Education."

2 Bloomer, "The LD Tightrope."
disabled students far surpasses the availability of resource room services anyway. Although it has proven in many instances to be more effective in dealing with moderate learning problems, it does not provide the total answer to the educational dilemma that exists. In spite of its impractical aspects, however, the resource room exists and grows as the only immediate alternative to the unsuccessful self-contained rooms. Its merits can easily be deduced by comparison of the features of both and with consideration of the principles of learning which the self-contained classroom very obviously defies.

The general belief of many of the pioneers of learning disabilities is that it will have to give up the luxury of isolation and discontinue the haphazard game with categories and terminology.¹ It is well agreed that the self-contained classroom has closed off channels of communication to the regular education, and as a consequence, the child has developed an additional handicap, which is social

¹Kephart, "Reflections on Learning Disabilities: Its Contribution to Education."
rather than mental.\footnote{Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."} Other instructional procedures will need to be developed also because it is seriously doubted that school systems can provide enough space or funding to place the large number of children with learning disabilities in the special classes.\footnote{Sabatino, "An Evaluation of Resource Rooms for Children with Learning Disabilities."}

An ideal program of remediation for children who just cannot learn in the present, very traditional and academically oriented school programs seems very illusive. It is even questioned by many educators whether or not an ideal program does exist. There are some who doubt the genuine concern and dedicated efforts claimed by many individuals working in the field. Inadequate or inappropriate education is blamed, in many cases, upon the half-hearted efforts by crucial contributors. This is not to demean the many well-intentioned efforts and sincerity of a great many people, as well as the large sum of money appropriated for educational welfare, but failure does exist and many children are being poorly served to the point of critical emotional side-effects. Bateman maintains that a threatening movement exists toward the accountability of our schools.\footnote{Divoky, "Learning Disability 'Epidemic'."}

\footnote{1Dockrell, "Education of Handicapped Children: The Social Dimension."}
\footnote{2Sabatino, "An Evaluation of Resource Rooms for Children with Learning Disabilities."}
\footnote{3Divoky, "Learning Disability 'Epidemic'."}
money, materials, size of classes, etc., that has contributed to the inadequate remediation of learning disability problems, but that teaching disability is the core of the problem. Velluntino also is in agreement and claims that the real problem actually is the lack of motivation that characterizes most school personnel. He stresses a need for greater commitment to the task of developing a suitable program to meet the needs of all children.¹

Kephart very convincingly states that the problem is bigger than special education since it is a problem which involves education in general. He predicted accurately that the field of learning disability would contribute greatly to the advancement in general education, since the two would become combined. The resource room is a first step since it is very conducive to the individualization of regular instruction, but no sooner is a resource room implemented, then a flood of referrals exceeds the capacity of the resource teacher to attend individually to each referral. It is felt that in today's school system the tendency is to sacrifice individualized programming to accommodate more children whenever faced with growing demands for service.

¹Vellutino, "New Direction or Swinging Pendulum?"
²Jenkins, "Comparing Small Group and Tutorial Instruction in Resource Rooms."
An exploration of alternatives with which learning handicapped children might be remediated is still needed. At this time, however, the preferred type of program is still the non-categorical resource room, in which the resource room teacher transfers procedures and materials to the classroom teacher. More resource rooms are being developed, and although serving only a limited number of people, they hold promise for further expansion. They seem to hold the key to education of relative normalcy as well as one in which individual dignity can be retained. We still need to turn the key for more children and hopefully, in time, unlock success and happiness for every child possible.

**Education's Responsibility**

It is the general consensus that the responsibility belongs to the educators. A necessary distinction must be made between programming and instructor's failures and the failures of the pupils. Gordon agrees with Dunn and states that the whole field of learning disabilities is

1Sabatino, "An Evaluation of Resource Rooms for Children with Learning Disabilities."

2Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children, p. 67.

3Dunn, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded--Is Much of It Justifiable?"
based on the false assumption that a child's failure to learn reflects his disability rather than the school's inability to teach.\(^1\) A well-known dictum in education is Brunner's statement that "almost any child can be taught almost anything if it is programmed correctly."\(^2\) We can apply this readily to special education which necessitates a great deal of creativity and holds challenges which require dedicated effort. Anything less is educational negligence when a child "dies in the classroom" because of the failure of others to meet his needs. Brunner's hypotheses that the child can learn is well-accepted, so the blame cannot be shifted feebly where it does not fit. It appears that innocent children are the helpless victims of a great educational innovation. Many involved educators derive solace from the fact that the schools are finally moving in the right direction. Silberman states very optimistically that the long trend in education


seems to be toward more openness, more humaneness and more decency.¹

Meanwhile, the learning disabled child is given half a promise and must continue struggling to survive until educators become enlightened in how to fulfill the other half.

¹Silberman, in interview with Diane Divoky. Learning.
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