

# A Framework for Considering Some Issues in Special Education

MAYNARD C. REYNOLDS

**G**ROWING attention is being given to creating conceptual framework for consideration of special education problems. Outlined below is one way of thinking about the broad range of services provided under special education. The framework is presented schematically, along with a brief discussion of its features, and then utilized to discuss some current issues. Consideration is given only to handicapped children, since programs for the gifted seem not to fit the structure is developed here.

## The Hierarchy of Special Education Programs

The variety of programs which comprise special education may be summarized in a chart which takes the form of a triangle (see next page). At the first level, across the broad base of the chart, is represented the large number of exceptional children, mainly those with minor deviations, who are enrolled in regular classes in the schools. Much of the effort to provide needed services for these children must be directed through regular classroom teachers.

Many exceptional children will not receive all required services in regular classes and thus the chart includes a number of more specialized services, organized in a succession of levels. The gradual narrowing of the chart indicates the smaller number\* of children involved as programs become more specialized.

The second level of service is referred to as "Regular Classroom with Consultation." Some children may be retained in regular classes if consultation is available to teachers and parents to help in understanding children and in making minor modifications in the school program. The schools are

rapidly becoming employers of school psychologists, special education consultant, school social workers, and other personnel who provide such consultation.

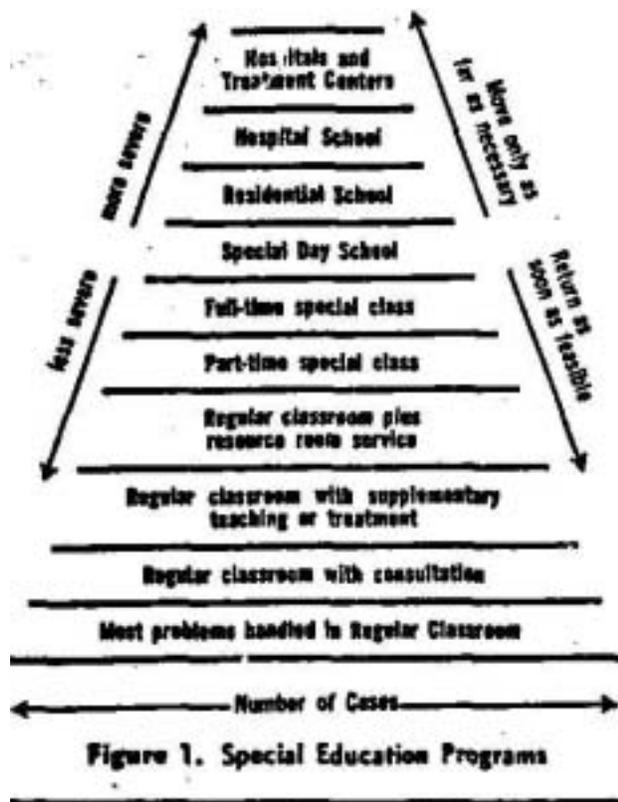
Children presenting more complex problems will sometimes need specialised services in the form of "Supplementary Teaching or Treatment." This third level of service is illustrated by the work of itinerant speech correctionists who frequently work with individuals or small groups of children for brief periods each day or several times weekly. Similarly, some disturbed children may be given brief periods of counseling help on a regular schedule. Children with hearing or vision problems frequently receive needed supplementary help from specialists while basically enrolled in regular classes.

A next level in the chart is labeled "Regular Class room plus Resource Room Service." This type of program has probably been most fully developed for visually handicapped children and in the field of remedial reading, but illustrations may be found in other fields of special education as well. In such programs children are enrolled in regular classes, but special resource rooms are provided in their schools. The children spend a part of each day in the resource room, sometimes on a definite schedule and sometimes on an irregular schedule according to special needs as they arise through the school day. A blind child, for example, may take most instruction in regular classes with normal children but go to the resource room in his building for instruction in braille, mobility, or typing. The resource room includes all necessary special equipment and materials and is in the charge of a specially trained teacher who carefully coordinates her teaching with that of regular classroom teachers.

Succeeding levels, in order, are the "Part-time Special Class," the "Full-time Special Class," and

---

\* MAYNARD C. REYNOLDS is a Professor of Educational Psychology, College of Education, University of Minnesota at Minneapolis



the "Special Day School." Programs of these types are well known and need no description for present purposes. Each represents a further step or extension of program to a more specialized level.

Nearer the top of the chart is the "Residential School." Placement in such schools involves separation from the home environment as well as further specialization in the educational program.

Finally, two programs are listed in which the primary emphasis is on treatment, protection, or care, in contrast to the educational emphasis in programs of lower levels the first of these is called the "Hospital-School" and the latter, "Hospitals and Treatment Centers." School departments in institutions of these types may have importance, but usually referral of children to such institutions is based upon factors other than educational need. Over-all program control is usually not in the hands of educators.

### Features of the Framework

Several features of the organization of the above chart used to be indicated. In considering the sev-

eral levels of program, proceeding from the bottom to the top of the chart, a number of changes may be observed:

- 1) the problems of children placed in programs tend to become more severe or more complex;
- 2) programs tend to become more expensive;
- 3) responsibility for administration of programs shifts from school authorities to health, welfare, or correction authorities;
- 4) children are more separated from ordinary school and home life;
- 5) demands for highly specialized personnel in crease;
- 6) parent and general public understanding of programs decreases.

Perhaps the major feature of the scheme is that it present) the broad range in types of special education programs in an organized fashion. The descriptions of the various levels have been given with no thought that they represent the ultimate in types of programs. Indeed, many other types of programs exist and still others will be devised. Within this conceptual framework several current issues in special education may now be considered.

### Issues in Special Education

#### Segregation

One of the continuing issues in special education is that of segregation—the separation of individuals or groups of children. It is correctly argued, for example, that removing a child from his home and neighborhood school for placement in a residential school is a serious matter. It may be convenient to make such placements routinely, but conflicting values emerge which in fact place extraordinary responsibility upon those who make such placement decisions. Similarly, it can be a disturbing experience for a child to be placed in a special class or any other type of special program. But it is also inexcusable to delay or deny special services when they are needed.

The framework outlined above may be useful in stating a general attitude or policy toward these continuing problems of separation or segregation. The prevailing view is that normal home and school life should be preserved if at all possible. When a special placement is necessary to provide suitable care or education, it should be no more "special" than necessary. In terms of the chart, this is to say that chil-

MARCH, 1962

dren should be moved upward only as far as necessary and be returned downward as soon as feasible. By Mating such a principle within the structure of programs as proposed here, views about the segregation issue can be made quite explicit.

If programs are operated according to the above principle or attitude, we would find increasing numbers of blind and hearing-handicapped children returning from residential to day schools after they have achieved special skills through intensive early training. Enrollments in special orthopedic schools at the junior high school level should be lower than at the elementary school level if elementary school programs are effective. Movement among the various levels will perhaps be less possible for the mentally retarded, but in most cases problems of transition would loom large and significant.

The strategy proposed here requires variety and range in programs for all handicapping areas, continuing assessment procedures to assure changes in placement at appropriate times, and coordinated planning and placement services covering all levels.

### **The Responsibility of the School to Severely Handicapped Children**

Between the levels of responsibility well established in the schools, mainly for those with relatively mild handicaps, and programs operated by other public agencies, such as mental hospitals and training schools for delinquent children, there is a zone of indefiniteness in public responsibility. Trainable retarded children and many of the multiply handicapped fall in this "in-between" zone of responsibility. These children have more serious handicaps than the schools are prepared to consider and yet they often do not fit into programs of institutions geared to the very seriously handicapped. In recent years this "in-between" tone has become very active, with many voluntary groups goading public agencies to establish programs. Because programs for children in these categories have never been provided, agencies of all types can "beg off" on precedent.

An interpretation of the problems of these "in-between" groups is suggested by the present conceptual framework. Historically, health, welfare, and correction authorities were given early responsibility in most states for the operation of institutions for the most severely deviant. In recent years, these programs have often been extended into the commu-

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

### **interlocking jumbo-blox**

Safe, simple interlock needs no help from teacher. Block ends form an easy hand-hold. Available in 12" and 24" sizes, with 36" boards that fit securely into the interlock.

### **biggest-ever hollow blocks**

3 Huge sizes—for building, climbing, dramatising. New non-skid surfaces. Excellent for ages 4 to 11.

### **blocks on wheels**

Unbreakable wheel cars strong enough to ride. Blocks lock on, make "seats".

### **block play without noise**

No noise to endure, no noise to distract. NEW IDEAS permits block play in every room.

### **storage for supplies, books**

Sectional cabinets and book shelves on wheels, table-top trucks. School-tested.

### **station wagon • boat • firefly**

Cooperative play equipment on wheels. Hold four children, push-powered by more.

### **all in your new mor-pla catalog**

Free. Write Mor-Pla Department E23, P.O. Box 414, Detroit 31, Michigan

nity in the form of out-patient mental health centers, growing numbers of social casework agencies, improved probationary services for delinquent youth and in other ways. Schools, starting from the level of regular classrooms, have gradually extended their programs to more specialised levels and strengthened relationships with all varieties of community agencies. The separation of schools and other agencies has been lessened; levels of the "chart" have gradually merged.

Problems of the "in-between" children will need to be solved by even closer cooperation among agencies of many types. The trainable retarded, for example, often present life-long dependency problems. It is futile to think about responsibility for these children in terms of "education versus welfare." They need health, welfare, and educational services—not just one or another. The challenge in this field, as in many others, is to establish new and effective Interagency community programs. One of the real and current dangers is that programs for such "in-between" children will develop in expedient forms without a clear formulation of public responsibility. Already, too many programs exist with only fragile support and token administrative services by public

agencies. Such conditions bode ill for the quality and durability of these programs.

### Other Problems Considered Briefly

Two additional problems will be examined briefly in the present framework. The first of these concerns the form of special aids as provided mainly by state governments. When the variety of programs is considered, it may be seen that financial aid programs tied to only one or a limited number of types of programs may introduce rigidities in programming. Aids on a per-classroom unit or per-pupil basis are probably less desirable than are aids tied to professional personnel, leaving some variety in the ways they may work with exceptional children.

Implications for terminology and classification may also be mentioned. First, the emphasis on "flow" of children among levels of program implies that categorization of children is always tentative and subject to revision. Second, it is suggested that more attention needs to be given to classification of programs rather than so exclusively to classification of children. The essential problem in educational placement is to allocate children to programs likely to be

most valuable for them. Methods of classifying children now used in special education seem to have developed with all too little attention to subtle differentiations necessary to make the most effective placements. As more attention shifts to the program side of the classification and placement problem, it seems likely that approaches to individual child study and classification will be greatly revised. A child's potential is not independent of his situation, or of the methods used in his education, yet we so often proceed as if abstract study of the child himself is sufficient.

### Summary

A summary of special education programs has been presented in the form of a hierarchy, ranging from regular classes, through several intermediate levels of special services, to hospitals and treatment centers. The levels of the hierarchy were ordered according to increasing specialization. As children are placed in higher level programs their separation from normal home and school life increases. Responsibility for programs at the highest levels of specialization has generally been placed with health, welfare or corrections authorities. Schools have carried responsibility for programs serving the larger numbers of less severely handicapped children. Within this context, certain current issues in special education were discussed.

It was suggested that having a broad range of services is important and that children should be placed in programs of no more special character than absolutely necessary. There should be continuing assessment of children in special programs with a view toward returning them to more ordinary environments as soon as feasible. Problems of providing services to certain groups of children, such as the trainable retarded, have been interpreted as being partly historical in origin for reason of their "in-between" status in regard to school responsibility and functions of other agencies. To serve these "in-between" children, new patterns of interaction among a variety of agencies will be necessary. Finally, the importance of developing financial aid patterns which stimulate the development of a fuller range of services is stressed and a plea is made for more attention to program differentiation in developing systems of classification and terminology to be applied to handicapped children.

MARCH, 1962

---

## OPENINGS FOR TEACHERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, EITHER FULLY OR PROVISIONALLY QUALIFIED

Areas include: Trainable Retarded, Educable Retarded, Brain Damaged, Slow Learning, Emotionally Disturbed, Aurally Handicapped, and Blind and Partially Sighted. Salary schedule from \$5,200 to \$7,450 dependent upon training and experience. 9 1/2 month term. Please address replies to: J. Harold Brinley, Administrative Assistant in Charge of Personnel, Clark County School District, P. O. Box 551, Las Vegas, Nevada.