

BASIC COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO
EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN*

A Position paper adopted by the Council for Exceptional
Children at its Miami Convention in April, 1971; prepared by
the CEC Policies Commission, Maynard Reynolds, Chairman

Education is the right of all children.

The principle of education for all is based on the philosophical premise of democracy that every person is valuable in his own right and should be afforded equal opportunities to develop his full potential. Thus, no democratic society should deny educational opportunities to any child, regardless of his potentialities for making a contribution to society. Since the passage of the first public-school laws in the mid-nineteenth century, the principle has received general endorsement and qualified execution. While lip service has been paid to the intent of the principle, various interpretations of the terms "education" and "all children" have deprived many children of their right.

The ordinary educational opportunities provided by the schools have tended to neglect or exclude children with unusual learning needs; the gifted; the physically, mentally, and emotionally handicapped; and the victims of socio-economic and cultural differences. These children need special education – specialized diagnostic and instructional services – and, in order to be able to benefit fully from the education, they need the opportunity to view themselves as acceptable to society. They need stable and supportive home lives, wholesome community interactions, and the opportunity to view themselves and others in a healthy manner.

Because of their exceptionality, many of the children need to begin their school experiences at earlier ages than are customary for children in our society, many need formal educational services well into adulthood, and many require health and social services that are closely coordinated with school programs. Meeting these needs is essential to the total development of exceptional children as individuals and as members of society.

For some decades now, educators and schools have been responding to the challenge of educating the exceptional children. At least five times as many school systems provide special educational services today as a quarter of a century ago. Still, not all children are being provided for fully; relatively few services exist for the intellectually gifted child, for example, and less than half of the children who need highly specialized services are receiving them. The community should extend its demand that school personnel must learn to understand and serve the individual needs of these children as well as those more easily accommodated in the educational system. The surge of interest among educators in individualizing instruction hopefully will mean more sensitivity to the educational needs of all children, and particularly to those with special needs.

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The problem of providing special educational services is admittedly multiple and complex. Many interest groups, such as the parents of handicapped, inner-city, minority-group children, and community organizations, and the frequent legislative studies at both state and national levels, have created many issues over the direction and kinds of services that should be provided. Who should be educated? What is the role of the school and other agencies in providing services for the exceptional child and his family? These issues must be resolved if the right of education for all is to be reflected in a meaningful commitment to and provision of education for every child.

The policies proposed here are an attempt to clarify the basic commitments and responsibilities of Special Educators, those educators whose professional competencies center on educating exceptional children. This position paper* is the first in a series initiated by a new Policies Commission of the Council for Exceptional Children; it is the hope of the Council that the position papers will become a seminal force for continuing change. Each policy statement is preceded by a discussion that establishes the rationale for the statement. In order to keep the paper within a reasonable size limit, the discussions are necessarily kept to a minimum.

While the statement which follows pertains mainly to handicapped children the Policies Commission plans an early position paper dealing with the issues of educating gifted children.

I. The Goal and Commitment of Special Education

The fundamental purposes of Special Education are the same as those of regular education: the optimal development of the individual as a skillful, free, and purposeful person, able to plan and manage his own life and to reach his highest potential as an individual and as a member of society. Indeed, Special Education developed as a set of highly specialized areas of education in order to provide exceptional children with the same opportunities as other children for a meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling life.

To Special Educators, the statements of educational goals that stress the primacy of intellectual development are inadequate. They have learned from their experiences with children who have learning problems that so-called "intelligent" behavior is interrelated with individual motivation, cultural values, physical competency, self-esteem, and other non-cognitive variables.

Perhaps the most important concept that has been developed in Special Education as the result of experiences with exceptional children, is that of the fundamental individualism of every child. The aspiration of Special Educators is to see every child as a unique composite of potentials, abilities, and learning needs for whom an educational program must be designed to meet his particular needs. From its beginnings, Special Education has championed the cause of children with learning problems. It is as the advocates of such children and of the concept of individualization that Special Education can come to play a major creative role in the mainstream of education.

*Developed in a series of discussions from an original draft statement by Maynard C. Reynolds and Coralie Wells Dietrich.

The special competencies of Special Educators are more than a collection of techniques and skills. They comprise a body of knowledge, methods, and philosophical tenets that are the earmark of the professions. As professionals, Special Educators are dedicated to the optimal education of exceptional children and they reject the misconception of schooling that is nothing but custodial care.

POLICY: THE FOCUS OF ALL EDUCATION SHOULD BE THE UNIQUE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD, AND OF THE CHILD AS A TOTAL FUNCTIONING ORGANISM. ALL EDUCATORS SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THE IDENTITY OF FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSES IN BOTH SPECIAL AND REGULAR EDUCATION.

THE PURPOSE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IS TO ENLARGE THE VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR ALL CHILDREN SO THAT THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF PROGRAMS MAY BE FURTHERED AS A WAY OF FULFILLING THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSES OF EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN, WHATEVER THEIR NEEDS.

AS ADVOCATES OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL CHILDREN TO EDUCATION, SPECIAL EDUCATORS AFFIRM THEIR PROFESSIONALISM.

II. Implementation of Universal Education

A. Compulsory Services and Compulsory Attendance

The provision of universal education for children in a democratic society has been translated as a commitment to the providing of educational opportunities for every child, whatever may be his socio-economic status; cultural or racial origins; physical, intellectual, or emotional equipment; potential contribution to society; and whatever his educational needs may be. This commitment to every child thus includes a commitment to children with unusual learning needs and to those with outstanding abilities and talents. Although providing education for these children may require a variety of specialized services and instructional programs, some costly and some requiring radical innovations in traditional educational structures, there is no test that can be used to include some children and exclude others where the principle of universal education is concerned.

Some of the specialized services that may be essential if exceptional children are to attend school include the provision of transportation facilities, functional architectural environments, personalized equipment aids, individualized instruction programs, and special education and supporting personnel. Certainly the dollar-and-cents outlay for such programs may be great; if they are not instituted and maintained, however, the cost of neglect is infinitely greater and must be borne mainly by the children as well as by their families, the communities, and society as a whole.

POLICY: THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION INCLUDES EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AS WELL AS OTHERS. EFFORTS SHOULD BE STRONGLY SUPPORTED TO MAKE EXPLICIT THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOCAL AND STATE AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS TO EDUCATE EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN.

STATE AND PROVINCIAL REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING EDUCATION SHOULD INCLUDE PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS BY ALL EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN.

B. Early and Continuing Education

Schools have traditionally assumed educational responsibilities for children beginning at about age five or six years and ending with late adolescence. Increasingly, it is apparent that formal educational experiences at earlier ages would pay rich dividends in the full development of the capabilities of many exceptional children. Special Educators now have much useful knowledge and technique for working with very young exceptional children. What is needed is the identification of the children who could benefit from early education and the actual implementation of programs.

Communities should make their schools responsible for conducting search and census operations through which children who may need specialized education at very early ages can be identified. The voluntary enrollment of such children by their parents is inadequate because many parents may not be aware of the child's special needs or of available forms of assistance. An important part of early education programs are procedures for child study that encourage adaptations to the particular needs of very young exceptional children.

Individuals with special talents, gifts, or handicaps frequently need education and periodic re-education beyond the traditional school-leaving ages. To encourage the continuing development of youths and adults and to maximize their contributions to society vigorous efforts are necessary to provide them with vocational education, placement services, employment counseling, and job training. For any child with educational problems, the schools should provide the facilities for the continuation of his education or for retraining when necessary at whatever age.

POLICY: SCHOOLS SHOULD PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS AND REGARDLESS OF AGE.

SCHOOLS SHOULD ACTIVELY SEEK OUT CHILDREN WHO MAY HAVE SPECIALIZED EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES. A PARTICULAR COMMITMENT SHOULD BE MADE TO INITIATE HOME-CARE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, TO ESTABLISH SPECIALIZED NURSERY-SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS, AND TO UTILIZE SPECIALIZED COMPONENTS OF REGULAR EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO SERVE EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN.

COMPETENCY AND MAXIMAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE THE CRITERIA FOR TERMINATING AN INDIVIDUAL'S SCHOOLING RATHER THAN AGE. IDEALLY, NO PERSON'S FORMAL EDUCATION WOULD EVER BE TERMINATED; THE SCHOOL SHOULD ALWAYS BE READY TO SERVE HIS EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING NEEDS AS . REQUIRED FOR HIS OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN INDEPENDENT, PRODUCTIVE PERSON.

C. The Maintenance of Attendance: School Excuse, Exclusion, and Expulsion

The schools' commitment to compulsory, universal education has often been circumvented by the indiscriminate use of excuse, exclusion, and expulsion. Children with problems have frequently been demitted from schools on the dubious grounds that they were uneducable, had undesirable characteristics, or disrupted the education of other children.

A host of legal decisions in recent years has emphasized the right of children to attend school unless their presence is provably harmful to others. Other decisions have enunciated the doctrine that children have a legal right to education and, therefore, cannot be excluded from all or part of school activities without legal procedures.

When a child is suspended from all or part of the school activities as a disciplinary measure, the suspension should be for a limited period, the order should include provisions for the child's re-entry, and the date of re-entry should be definite.

Although children are normally excused from school for routine reasons of illness or family arrangements, long-term excuses should be permitted only under extraordinary conditions and under continual review.

Since no child's right to education may be legally abrogated, the exclusion of any child on the ground that no facilities are available for him cannot be tolerated. For the past three decades the trend in state and provincial laws has been to develop special education services at local levels; the special programs for a small number of exceptional children that may seem impractical can often be made possible by innovative approaches and uses of available regular and consultative personnel.

POLICY: THE EXCUSE, EXCLUSION, OR EXPULSION OF CHILDREN FROM ALL OR PART OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED EXCEPT UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS WITH DUE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S LEGAL RIGHTS.

1. ALL DEMISSIONS SHOULD BE FOR STATED PERIODS OF TIME AND SHOULD INCLUDE DEFINITE PROVISIONS FOR ADMITTING OR RE-ADMITTING THE CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.
2. CHILDREN SO DEMITTED SHOULD REMAIN THE CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOLS: THEIR DEMISSIONS SHOULD BE UNDER CONTINUOUS REVIEW SO THAT THE CHILDREN CAN BE RE-ADMITTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. OUTSIDE AGENCIES SHOULD BE INVOLVED WHEN NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE CHILDREN'S RE-ADMISSION.
4. AN ACCURATE REGISTER SHOULD BE MAINTAINED BY LOCAL SCHOOL AGENCIES AND BY STATE OR PROVINCIAL AGENCIES OF ALL CHILDREN EXCUSED, EXCLUDED, OR EXPELLED FROM ALL OR PARTS OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND OF THE REASONS FOR THE DEMISSIONS. THESE AGENCIES SHOULD CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH SOLVING PROBLEMS ATTENDANT TO THE
5. TO PREVENT THE EXCLUSION OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN FROM LOCAL SCHOOLS, STATE AND PROVINCIAL AGENCIES SHOULD ASSESS THE GAPS AND NEEDS IN COMMUNITY SERVICES AND COOPERATE WITH THE LOCAL SCHOOLS IN FILLING THEM.

III. Special Education Within the Schools

A. The Relations of Special and Regular School Programs

Special Education is an integral part of the total educational enterprise, not a separate order. In any school system Special Education is a means of enlarging the capacity of the system to serve the educational needs of' all children.

The particular function of Special Education within the schools (and the education departments of other institutions) is to identify children with unusual needs and to aid in the effective fulfillment of those needs. This fulfillment, at the present time, is accomplished in many regular school programs as well as by many special programs that cannot be included in regular classrooms by teachers without assistance. A primary goal of educators should be to help build accomodative learning opportunities for exceptional children in mainstream educational programs. In the implementation of this goal Special Education can serve as a support system; Special Educators can assist regular school personnel in managing the education of exceptional children.

When the special placement of a child is required, the aim of the placement should be to maximize the development and freedom of the child rather than to accommodate the regular classroom.

POLICY: SPECIAL EDUCATION SHOULD FUNCTION WITHIN AND AS A PART OF THE REGULAR, PUBLIC-SCHOOL FRAMEWORK. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, THE FUNCTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A TOTAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SUITABLE FOR ALL CHILDREN.

FROM THEIR BASE IN THE REGULAR SCHOOL SYSTEM SPECIAL EDUCATORS CAN FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIZED RESOURCES BY COORDINATING THEIR SPECIALIZED CONTRIBUTIONS

WITH THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL SYSTEM. ONE OF THE PRIMARY GOALS OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS SHOULD BE THE ENHANCEMENT OF REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRAMS AS A RESOURCE FOR ALL CHILDREN.

B. The Placement of Children in Special School Programs

Special Education takes many forms and can be provided within a broad spectrum of administrative arrangements. Agreement is general that children with special educational needs should be served in regular classrooms and neighborhood schools insofar as these arrangements are conducive to good educational progress. It is necessary sometimes, however, to provide special supplementary services for exceptional children or to remove them from parts or all of regular programs. Sometimes it is even necessary to remove some children from their homes and communities for placement in residential schools, hospitals, or training centers. Even when residential school placements have been made, it is desirable that the children attend local community schools for parts of their schooling. Under such programs, it is essential that the local schools be fully willing to accept the children.

The continuum from regular to highly specialized schools (often residential) represents the broad range of educational programs that is available to meet the individual needs of exceptional children. It is not uncommon for children to be placed into one or another Special Education facility by processes of rejection or by simplistic testing-categorizing methods rather than by careful decisions that seek to optimize the benefits for the children. When no options exist, as often occurs in the planning for gifted children or those with severe handicaps, and when decisions are made poorly, the children are denied their fundamental rights to free, public education and the education authorities violate the basic tenets of our democratic society.

Schools as a whole and in all their parts are a resource for children and placements should be made among and within them only for valid educational reasons. In the process the psycho-social needs of the children should not be overlooked. Like all children, exceptional children need environmental stability, emotional nurturance and social acceptance.

POLICY: SPECIAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE ARRANGED FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN WHENEVER FEASIBLE TO PROTECT THE STABILITY OF THEIR HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND TO ENHANCE THEIR SELF-CONCEPTS. SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVING SEPARATION FROM COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND HOME LIFE, SHOULD BE MADE ONLY AFTER CAREFUL STUDY AND FOR COMPELLING REASONS.

WITHIN SCHOOLS THE PLACEMENT OF ALL CHILDREN SHOULD MAXIMIZE THEIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION. SPECIALIZED PLACEMENTS THAT ARE EFFECTED CRUELY AND SIMPLY BY THE REJECTION OF CHILDREN FROM REGULAR SCHOOL SITUATIONS ARE EDUCATIONALLY AND MORALLY INDEFENSIBLE. SPECIAL EDUCATION IS

NOT AND SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A RESIDUAL OPERATION OR
CALCHALL FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DIFFICULT TO TEACH. EQUALLY
INDEFENSIBLE IS THE FAILURE TO DEVELOP NEEDED DIFFERENTIATION
OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS THAT RESULTS IN THE CONFINEMENT OF PUPILS
IN INAPPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.

C. Elimination of the Labeling-Categorizing of Children

The field of Special Education is concerned with children who have unusual needs and with school programs that employ unusual techniques. As the result of early attitudes and programs that stressed assistance for severely handicapped children, the field developed a vocabulary and practices based on the labeling and categorizing of children. In recent decades the labeling-categorizing was extended to children with milder degrees of exceptionality. The continued use of the terms, unfortunately, tends to rigidify the thinking of all educators on the significance and purposes of Special Education and to be dysfunctional and even harmful for the children.

Words such as "defective," "disabled," "retarded," "impaired," "disturbed," and "disordered," when attached to children with special needs, are stigmatic labels that produce unfortunate results in both the children and the community's attitudes toward the children. The problems are magnified when the field organizes and regulates its programs around classification systems that define categories of children according to such terms. Many of the classifications are oriented to etiology, prognosis, or necessary medical treatment rather than to educational classifications, and are of little value to the schools. Simple psychometric thresholds, which have sometimes been allowed to become pivotal considerations in educational decision making, present another set of labeling problems.

The most valuable contribution to education that Special Education makes is in terms of its specialized knowledge and competencies, values, and procedures for individualizing educational programs for individual children, whatever their special needs. Indeed, Special Educators at their most creative are the advocates of children who are not well-served by schools except by special arrangements. To further the understanding and servicing of such children, Special Educators as well as other educational personnel should eliminate the use of simplistic categorizing.

No one can deny the importance of some of the variables that traditionally have had importance in Special Education such intelligence, hearing, and vision. However, these variables in all their complex forms and degrees must be assessed in terms of educational relevance for a particular child* Turning the variables into typologies that may contribute to excesses in labeling-categorizing children is indefensible and should be eliminated.

In the past many legislative and regulating systems have specified criteria for including children in an approved category as the starting point for specialized programming and funding. The practice places high incentives on the labeling of children and undoubtedly results in the erroneous placement of many children. It is desirable that financial aids be tied to educational programs rather than to children and that systems for allocating children to specialized programs be much more open than in the past.

POLICY: SPECIAL EDUCATORS SHOULD ENHANCE THE ACCOMMODATIVE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES TO SERVE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MORE EFFECTIVELY. IN IDENTIFYING SUCH CHILDREN, SPECIAL EDUCATORS SHOULD BE CONCERNED WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, NOT WITH GENERALIZED LABELING OR CATEGORIZING OF CHILDREN.

DECISIONS ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN SHOULD BE MADE IN TERMS OF CAREFULLY INDIVIDUALIZED PROCEDURES THAT ARE EXPLICITLY ORIENTED TO THE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS.

TO FURTHER DISCOURAGE THE LABELING-CATEGORIZING OF CHILDREN, PROGRAMS SHOULD BE CREATED ON THE BASIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS SERVED RATHER THAN ON THE BASIS OF CATEGORIES OF CHILDREN SERVED.

REGULATORY SYSTEMS THAT ENFORCE THE RIGID CATEGORIZATION OF PUPILS AS A WAY OF ALLOCATING THEM TO SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS ARE INDEFENSIBLE. FINANCIAL AIDS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE TIED TO SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS RATHER THAN TO FINDING AND PLACING CHILDREN IN THOSE CATEGORIES AND PROGRAMS.

D. The Need for Flexibility and Development

Because of rapid changes and developments in the environmental factors that influence the characteristics of children and the conditions of their lives, Special Education should maintain a flexibility that permits it to adapt to changing requirements.

Some of the events and changes that have had major impact on Special Education in recent years are the following: a rubella epidemic, discovery of preventatives for retrolental fibroplasia, increasing number of premature births, increasing awareness of the deleterious effects of poverty and malnutrition, new techniques in surgical intervention, invention of individual electronic hearing aids, and adaptation of low-vision aids. Changes and developments in public health, medicine, technology, and social programs may have only a small total effect in school systems but they frequently have major impacts on Special Education programs. Changes in one aspect of Special Education quickly are reflected in other aspects of the field as, for example, the rapid development of day-school programs for exceptional children which has been reflected by a more severely handicapped population in residential schools.

POLICY: SPECIAL EDUCATORS MUST SEEK TO BE HIGHLY FLEXIBLE IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES TO MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS HAVE PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUSTAINING THEIR PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS AND DEVELOPMENT AS A BASIS FOR CHANGING PROGRAMS TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS.

E. The School and Comprehensive Services

Over the decades schools have increasingly broadened their services to children and communities in many ways as, for example, adding school psychologists and social workers to the regular staffs. There is a growing movement among educators to become general child advocates and to make the school a broad developmentally-oriented, competency-producing agency that takes over functions sometimes assigned to other agencies. By contrast, strong voices are also urging that schools limit their activities. They want schools to restrict their concerns to raising the intellectual levels of children and to avoid substituting themselves for other agencies or placing themselves in loco parentis.

At issue is the question of what role schools and other agencies should play in meeting the needs of exceptional children and in responding to the demands for a wide range of services from the families of such children. At the root of the issue is the problem that many children and their families need coordinated services in health, recreation, and welfare, as well as in education. The achievement of coordinated child-centered and family-centered services is difficult because of the fragmentation of responsibilities for those services among many agencies and professions. The school's role in the development of comprehensive programs is in a state of confusion because of the differing points of view.

The Educational Policies Commission, a former joint venture of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators, issued two statements on the problem, a decade apart in time, each embracing a different point of view. The 1939 statement, entitled Social Services and the Schools, advocated the limited view that health, welfare, and recreation services should function outside the schools and meet the schools' concerns through liaison and persuasion. This arrangement can be criticized on the grounds of its looseness and diffusion of leadership, authority, and responsibility.

The 1948 statement, Education for All American Children, proposed that schools provide the children of a community with a broad range of services including, among others, health, psychological, welfare, and family counseling services; residential programs for exceptional children from rural areas; nursery school and early education programs in the home; and provisions for dropouts based on concern for the problems of minority groups.

No clear answers can be proposed here. The issue indicates, however, that very real problems about the role of schools exist and that solutions must be sought.

POLICY: AS LONG AS EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN NEED COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES, SCHOOLS SHOULD BE ACTIVELY CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM OF HOW SUCH SERVICES CAN BE BEST PROVIDED. BECAUSE THE AVAILABILITY OF COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES IS RELATED TO THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN, SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO GO BEYOND THEIR TRADITIONAL SOLE AS COORDINATORS OR USERS OF OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LEAD THE WAY IN DEVELOPING NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL FORMS OF COMPREHENSIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES.

IV. The School and the Family

The family is the fundamental social unit in our culture. As such it is invested with primary rights and obligations regarding the education of the child. The parents must have access to all available necessary information in order to be able to make optimal decisions about the child's education and to fulfill the family's obligations to the child. In recognition of these rights and because wholesome family relationships are vital requisites to the child's educational development, the school should establish mechanisms to provide adequate counseling and family services to insure that the parental participation in the decision-making processes will be on an informed basis. More broadly, the school should establish whatever structures are needed to create a genuine partnership with parents and community organisations in designing and implementing educational programs.

One of the most significant and promising developments in our society is the steady extension of participation in policy making to consumers of services. It is healthy and desirable that parents and lay groups should make their particular concerns known and have a part in policy formation. The consumers of services--the children themselves--are a valuable resource in evaluating the organization and delivery of services; they should not be ignored.

The child is not only a family member but an individual with basic rights to total educational development. When his basic rights as an individual and citizen are violated, even unwittingly and without malevolent intent on the part of the family, the school as an agent of the state should assume the necessary responsibilities to assure the child's rights to the fullest development of his capacities. It is urgently important that the schools employ qualified personnel to perform in this domain as it is an extremely sensitive area.

POLICY: AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, THE PARENTS OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AND ORGANIZED COMMUNITY GROUPS SHOULD BE GIVEN A RESPONSIBLE VOICE IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY FORMATION AND PLANNING ACTIVITIES.

 THE PRIMARY CONSUMERS OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, THE CHILDREN, SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED, AS A VALUABLE RESOURCE IN THE EVALUATION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES.

 AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY IN FULFILLING ITS OBLIGATIONS TO CHILDREN WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS, THE SCHOOLS SHOULD PROVIDE EDUCATIONALLY RELATED COUNSELING AND FAMILY SERVICES. IN CASES OF CLEAR EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT, THE SCHOOLS, THROUGH QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL, SHOULD MAKE EXTRA-ORDINARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.

V. The Responsibility of Higher Education

Historically, the training programs for teachers and other educational personnel needed to operate Special Education Programs were started in service

centers such as institutions for blind, deaf, and retarded children. Subsequently, a few colleges launched summer training programs in the early 1900's; by the 1930's, full-fledged programs were functioning in perhaps half a dozen colleges in the United States.

Only after World War II did large numbers of colleges and universities become involved in full sequences of special education training and, even into the 1970's many regions are left unserved by higher education. Even shorter is the history of research activities in Special Education as aspects of higher education functions.

Although programs for exceptional children can be and often have been started without specialized personnel, the training resources of colleges and universities are needed in support of quality programs. Through their full participation, training programs can be instituted that are creatively oriented and field related; and inservice training programs to upgrade and expand the expertise of personnel already working in the area can be established.

POLICY: COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES HAVE AN OBVIOUS BUT, AT THIS TIME, NOT COMPLETELY FILLED OBLIGATION TO DEVELOP AND COORDINATE THEIR RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN. THE OBLIGATION COMPRISES A NUMBER OF FACTORS:

1. TO PROVIDE THROUGH SCHOLARLY INQUIRY AN EXPANDED KNOWLEDGE-BASE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS;
2. TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL NEEDED TO CONDUCT PROGRAMS FOR HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN;
3. TO COOPERATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TESTING OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS;
4. TO PROVIDE FOR THE COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND PROFESSIONS SO THAT TRAINING AND SERVICE MODELS ARE CONGRUENT WITH EMERGING MODELS FOR COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SERVICES;
5. TO PROVIDE ALL STUDENTS, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE IN PROGRAMS RELATING SPECIFICALLY TO HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN, A BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING HUMAN DIFFERENCES;
6. TO EXEMPLIFY IN THEIR OWN PROGRAMS OF TRAINING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE--AND EVEN IN THEIR ARCHITECTURE--A CONCERN FOR ACCOMODATING AND UPGRADING THE WELFARE OF HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED PERSONS;
7. TO COOPERATE WITH SCHOOLS, AGENCIES, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS IN THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF NEEDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

VI. Levels of Government Responsibility
for the Support of Special Education

An important set of policy questions for the organisation and delivery of special education services is concerned with the allocation of public responsibilities at the different governmental levels: Local and intermediate*, state and provincial, and federal. One of the basic tenets of a democratic society is that education should be free, universal, equal, and designed to further each individual's optimal development. In implementing these principles, the different governments must provide not only financial supports, but legal, political and administrative assistance as well. The intent and provision of laws relating to education must be translated into action at every governmental level.

Since education is not a static process, the governmental agencies responsible for carrying out the legal mandates must provide leadership at every level to encourage improvement and innovation in the schools.

Local School Districts

POLICY: LOCAL AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD PROVIDE CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THEIR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN THE FINANCING OF EVERY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN THE LOCALITY.

THE LOCAL OR PRIMARY SCHOOL DISTRICT SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING AT LEAST ANNUAL REVIEWS OF ALL CHILDREN WHO ARE LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT (ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE PLACED OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT) TO ASSURE THAT THE EDUCATION OF EACH CHILD IS PROCEEDING ADEQUATELY. THE SCHOOL DISTRICT SHOULD MAINTAIN A COMPLETELY UP-TO-DATE ROSTER OF ALL ITS CHILDREN AND EXCUSE, EXPEL, OR EXCLUDE CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL ONLY UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS.

THE DISTRICT CARRIES MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE QUALITY OF ITS SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND FOR COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE COMPREHENSIVE CHILD-CENTERED SERVICES.

State and Provincial Governments

POLICY: THE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR ALL CHILDREN RESTS WITH STATE AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. THEY SHOULD PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORTS TO DEVELOP AND ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO ASSURE ADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO EVERY CHILD AT NO DIRECT COST TO HIS FAMILY.

*The term "intermediate" refers to special consortiums of local districts or to broad regional or zonal organizations that carry responsibility for specialized services within a broader than local-district school area.

SPECIAL FINANCIAL SUPPORTS SHOULD BE OFFERED BY THEM TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS, SINGLY OR IN COMBINATION, AND INTER-MEDIATE UNITS SO THAT NO "EXCESS" LOCAL COST IS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING NEEDED SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS OF HIGH QUALITY FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN. ALL STATE FINANCIAL CHARGES AND AIDS RELATING TO EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN SHOULD BE OF SUCH FORM THAT NO AGENCY IS INDUCED TO CHOOSE A PARTICULAR FORM OF EDUCATION OR PLACEMENT FOR A CHILD ON THE BASIS OF FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE TO ITSELF. SIMILARLY, FINANCIAL AID PATTERNS SHOULD NOT ENCOURAGE SIMPLE CATEGORIZING-LABELING OF CHILDREN.

A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY OF STATE AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS IS TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION TO A CAREFULLY PLANNED PROGRAM OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TO ASSURE COOPERATION AMONG THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT THAT MAY BE ABLE TO HELP SERVE EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

The Federal Government (United States)

(This portion of the document does not necessarily propose any policies for countries other than the United States. Full recognition is extended here to the differences among nations. It is not the intention of this document to attempt to influence any national government other than the United States of America.)

Since an educated and informed citizenry is basic to a democracy, it is the obligation of the Federal Government to make certain that every child is provided with a free and equal education. Children are the nation's primary resource and, as such, every child is entitled to an optimal education to maximize his contribution to the continuing development of the nation.

For this reason, there is particular justification for the Federal Government to support aspects of the educational enterprise that cannot reasonably be undertaken and supported individually by the several states. For example, the training of personnel at the most advanced levels and the support of research are activities that probably cannot be well served by the several states or local educational agencies.

POLICY: IN GENERAL, AND IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE MAJOR SUPPORT TO PROGRAMS IN THE FIELD OF SPECIAL EDUCATION THAT 1) ARE A DIRECT FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY SUCH AS PROGRAMS IN FEDERALLY OPERATED SCHOOLS FOR INDIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND THE EDUCATION OF THE DEPENDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAMS; OR 2) THAT SERVE REGIONAL OR NATIONAL NEEDS, SUCH AS (a) THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN; (b) THE TRAINING OF LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL TO SERVE AS A HIGH-LEVEL MOBILE, NATIONAL RESOURCE; AND, (c) -THE MAINTENANCE OF MAJOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORTS, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALIZED SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION, TO INDIVIDUAL AND COMBINATIONS OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT WISH TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE OR EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS FOR HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN OR THAT, FOR ANY REASON, ENROLL AN UNUSUALLY HIGH PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

BECAUSE THE EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN HAS, IN GENERAL, BEEN A NEGLECTED AREA, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE A STRONG SOURCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SPECIAL EDUCATION WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS, PLANNING OF NEEDED PROGRAMS, AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.