



History Note: New Book Details Anniversary of Special Education's Start

by [Access Press Staff](#) // December 10th, 2017

For many years children with disabilities were all too often denied an education in public schools. Children who weren't institutionalized had few options. Programs in larger cities were often in the oldest buildings, with few resources. For children in rural areas special education was typically just a wish, unless a persistent parent or persevering teacher could get a child into a classroom.

The University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration has announced the publication of a new book marking the 60th anniversary of a legal landmark in special education. The book **Dogged**

Determination: An Anthology of the 1957 Law Requiring Education for Handicapped Children in Minnesota's Public Schools – A First in the Nation is by Norena Hale and is now available.

A state statute overwhelming approved in 1957, Special Instruction for Handicapped Children of School Age, required special education in Minnesota's public schools for children with disabilities. It was one of the first laws of its kind in the United States.

The law helped lay the foundation for the later passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, which required special education to be provided in all public schools in the U.S. That was a forerunner of the current Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Hale provides historical context and tells the stories of the reformers who got the law passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. In the book Hale points out how ambitious the law was, in the face of how things had been for so very long.

“With the passage of the Special Instruction for Handicapped Children of School Age bill in 1957, Minnesota became one of the first states to require special education in public schools,” Hale wrote. “In the state at that time there were no teacher training programs, no Special Education Section at the Minnesota Department of Education, no special education administrators, very limited teaching methods, few teaching materials or curricula, very few

national experts to provide guidance, most rural schools had no programs for these children, etc. Most everything had to be created from scratch.”

The book draws on the work of Evelyn Deno, a University of Minnesota professor who collected stories from those who were involved in drafting and implementing the 1957 law. Deno, who also supervised special education in Minneapolis Public Schools, died in 2005 before her work could be published. The book draws its title from her dogged determination to save the stories of those who created special education programs.

Hale organized and condensed Deno’s stories. Gretchen Bratvold provided edit in to create a publishable manuscript. Part I of the book provides a succinct history of how children with disabilities were at first institutionalized and then gradually educated in public schools in Minnesota. Part II shares the stories from those involved in getting the law passed. Part III summarizes through first-hand accounts about how the 1957 law provided for the creation of a special education section in the Department of Education, for teacher training programs, and for individualized specialized services in the public schools.

The book is available at various booksellers, including Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble.

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles written by Luther Granquist and other contributors. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota’s disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities.