

In-Service Education: Key to PL 94-142's Service to Handicapped Children and Youth

Winifred I. Warnat

Only through comprehensive personnel development can school systems meet the massive requirements of PL 94-142. This author indicates some implications of the impact of this law upon in-service education.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) was legislated into law in 1975. Designed to assist the states in their response to judicial mandates requiring the provision of a free and appropriate education to all handicapped children and youth, the Act is in response to the states' plea that without federal financial support court mandates could not possibly be met. Therefore, PL 94-142 represents Congressional response to state appeals requesting federal financial assistance to provide appropriate and comparable educational services to the handicapped population as that provided the non-handicapped population.

All handicapped children between the ages of birth to 21 are the beneficiaries of PL 94-142 with its goal of providing full educational opportunity. Designated priorities for the use of federal funds identified first, unserved children, and secondly, inadequately-served children who are severely handicapped.

In order to obtain PL 94-142 funding, a state must submit annual plans demonstrating compliance to the federal law and addressing the following requirements:

1. Full educational opportunity
2. Due process standards
3. Confidentiality of information
4. Protection in evaluation procedures
5. Individualized education plans
6. Least restrictive environment
7. Participation of private school children
8. Personnel development
9. Public participation
10. State advisory panel.

The State Education Agency (SEA) assumes primary responsibility for implementation of PL 94-142.

Comprehensive System for Personnel Development

Prescribed in PL 94-142 is a comprehensive system for personnel development that consists of three components—in-service training, a personnel development plan, and dissemination. In order to implement this comprehensive system, specific criteria are required. Those criteria in-



"All handicapped children between the ages of birth to 21 are the beneficiaries of PL 94-142 with its goal of providing full educational opportunity."

clude: (a) a needs assessment; (b) innovative and experimental training programs; (c) resource utilization; (d) a plan of action; and (e) evaluation.

The annual needs assessment is conducted to determine the populations in need of training and to what extent they are appropriately trained, as well as to identify what specific training needs exist. Based on the needs assessment, innovative and experimental training programs are to be implemented on a continuous basis to address the identified needs. In implementing the various training programs, maximum use of available resources is to be made, which includes the use of talent identified within the local education agency, higher education, and other appropriate organizations involved in the delivery of educational services to handicapped children and youth. Dissemination, an essential element in terms of the collecting and reporting of current trends and activities relating to the education of handicapped children, is to be provided to the education care giving community. Finally, to ensure adequate delivery of training and services presented in the personnel development plan, an ongoing evaluation process must be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the comprehensive system of personnel development.

The implementation of PL 94-142 is a monumental task. Its goal of achieving full educational opportunity for all handicapped children from birth to 21 years of age at closer examination extends well beyond that population. Included within the regulated and prescribed implementation process is the assurance that in-service training programs are provided for all personnel who are involved in an education-related capacity with the education of handicapped children. In-service training focuses specifically on training other than that which leads to a degree. Training programs may be long or short term and may be conducted in a variety of settings. Included in the training effort must be the provision for appropriate incentive options to guarantee participation. Those incentives may include release time, stipends, academic credit, salary step credit, and other appropriate inducements.

Training Needs

The populations in need of training, include school administrators; both special education and regular classroom teachers; paraprofessionals (teacher aides and volunteers); specialists; parents and parent surrogates; and the like. It can be



"Another massive undertaking endorsed in PL 94-142 is in the area of parent involvement with an implied effort in parent education."

safely assumed that within that population, only special educators and specialists have adequate preparation in the basics of exceptionality. Therefore, a basic and critical training need for the remaining population is a general orientation to the exceptional child and his or her educational needs.

Mentioned specifically in PL 94-142 are procedural safeguards that include due process and confidentiality of information. These pertinent legal transactions are to guarantee the provision of full educational opportunity for the handicapped child. Clearly evident is the need to inform personnel involved with the education of handicapped children of the implications of these legal procedures, as well as to prepare them to facilitate the most appropriate placement and education environment for the handicapped child. It can be safely assumed that no segment of the training population is adequately prepared in this area.

Another crucial training need is in what PL 94-142 refers to as "protection in evaluation procedures." This refers to the identification and placement of handicapped children and also encompasses the use of nondiscriminatory (neither culturally nor racially biased) testing and evaluation procedures to guard against inappropriate labeling and placement. The concept of the "least

restrictive environment" is the critical underlying current in PL 94-142 in assuring the handicapped child of appropriate placement. Educators and specialists need additional training in this area, particularly in terms of the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is uniquely designed by them for each handicapped child they are serving.

The third imperative training need identified in PL 94-142 focuses on instructional skills development in terms of the designing and implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each handicapped child by the teacher on an annual basis. The teacher not only must have skills in evaluation and curricular design, but must also be able to prescribe a specific course of action with appropriate goals and anticipated outcomes included. It is assumed that the teacher has a foundation in the educational needs of exceptional children. The IEP must be developed collaboratively with a qualified school official, the classroom teacher, the child's parent or guardian, and if possible, the child himself or herself.

Implications

In attempting to analyze the impact of PL 94-142 on in-service training, a number of significant implications emerge.

1. The in-service training effort for preparing personnel in the education of handicapped children is, indeed, a monumental undertaking. Never before has an effort been made to train virtually all levels of personnel in education. Yet, this is the prescribed endeavor of PL 94-142 in assuring the education rights of handicapped children and youth.

2. While the Act emphasizes the importance of in-service training, no mention is made of the need for or the preparation of the training of trainers. It is assumed that the greatest proportion of training activities will be conducted by the local public school system, which will also be responsible for providing appropriate educational services for handicapped children. This crucial concern pertaining to trainer training must be addressed if highly skilled trainers are to be qualified to train in the areas of due process, least restrictive environment, individualized educational programs, and the like, identified in PL 94-142.

3. The funding pattern of the federal regulatory agency, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH), with authority responsible for the implementation of PL 94-142 is not commensurate with training priorities identified in the Act. In a recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report, *Training Educators for the Handicapped: A Need To Redirect Federal Programs* (1976), it was noted that even though BEH identified the training of regular classroom teachers as a major priority, that as late as 1976-77 only 9.3 percent of available funds were devoted to the in-service training of regular educators. HEW fiscal appropriations for 1977 remained the same.

4. While higher education has been responsive to the preparation of special educators, mostly at the graduate level, it has been relatively unresponsive to addressing both preservice and in-service regular educator training needs. This trend has been reinforced by the BEH funding pattern, which has continued to place major emphasis on the training of new special educators. The GAO report mentioned earlier noted that higher education now has the capacity to produce a sufficient number of special educators—enough to satisfy the demand. Consequently, until

higher education changes its orientation, the burden of responsibility for in-service training rests upon public school systems.

5. The implementation of "individualized educational programs" mandated by PL 94-142 is both time and labor intensive. Therefore, classroom teachers will need additional assistance to be provided by qualified teacher aides. The GAO report pointed out that within the public schools only 48,000 paraprofessionals are used in working with handicapped children in comparison with 1.9 million regular classroom teachers.

6. The trainee population to be affected most dramatically by PL 94-142 authorization for the "least restrictive environment" and "individualized educational programs" are classroom teachers. This population represents the largest population in need of training, as well as the one with the greatest training needs. Jasper Harvey, Director of Personnel Preparation, BEH, stated that:

... Personnel preparation programs for regular education ... will be of increasing importance, particularly toward enhancing the ability of regular administrators and teachers to establish and maintain the concept of placing handicapped children in classroom situations that provide the least restrictive environment commensurate with the needs (1976).

Based on the funds allocated (9.3 percent) to the in-service training of regular educators, there is little indication of actualizing this concern.

7. Easy to overlook in PL 94-142 are the vocational and career education aspects of the full educational opportunity goal. Perhaps the most critical aspect of the education process, vocational and career education programs, have notoriously excluded the handicapped, whom they are now mandated to serve. It is obvious that the instruction of vocational educators is needed to expand career opportunities for the handicapped, and that emphasis should be placed on overcoming negative attitudes and on skills development for working with the handicapped.

8. The early identification process, which focuses on handicapped children ages birth through five, is one of the most difficult aspects of PL 94-142 implementation. However, educational service delivery for young handicapped children is significant as an initiating effort involving public education in early childhood. To



"Parents must receive appropriate and effective support, guidance, and education concerning their legal rights as related to their handicapped child and the service he or she is provided."

date training of early childhood personnel, most of whom are paraprofessionals, in the education of handicapped children is virtually nonexistent, exceptions being the efforts of Head Start and E.P.S.D.T. (Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program). The birth through two aged population is addressed in only a cursory manner in PL 94-142.

9. An understated in-service aspect, crucial to the implementation of PL 94-142, is the preparation of school administrators on the impact of the Act on their particular jurisdictions. It is clear that they will be held most responsible for the total realization of PL 94-142.

10. Another massive undertaking endorsed in PL 94-142 is in the area of parent involvement with an implied effort in parent education. Specifically, the Act points out the following three areas in which parents need special preparation: (a) Since they must be involved in developing its design, parents need special preparation in Individualized Educational Program development; (b) Parents need to have full understanding of the legal implications of evaluation and placement of their handicapped child, and therefore, need special preparation in understanding due process; and (c) Because parents now have the

right to examine their children's records, it is important that they understand those records and are appropriately prepared to do so.

Recommendations

In reviewing the history of legislation relating to the education of the handicapped, PL 94-142 can be classified as a monumental accomplishment. No piece of education legislation has been more far-reaching in terms of its implications for in-service training. However, while it is significant in establishing precedence for future education-related legislative efforts, there must be adequate planning and personnel preparation if it is to be successfully implemented. The following recommendations focus upon those essentials:

1. *In-service training must concentrate on the critical need populations, namely, regular classroom teachers, paraprofessionals—especially teacher aides—vocational and career educators, and school administrators. All four populations, to varying degrees, need special training in (a) general special education and the handicapped child; (b) design and implementation of individualized education programs; (c) identification and placement; and (d) due process and confidentiality.*

Training opportunities and techniques need to be varied in order to attract and motivate the broadest number of educator populations.

2. *Parents must receive appropriate and effective support, guidance, and education concerning their legal rights as related to their handicapped child and the service he or she is provided.* Since the burden of responsibility for this parent preparation rests with the local school system, teachers as well as administrators need to have knowledge of and be sensitive to parents' perceptions and needs concerning their handicapped child. How to provide parents of handicapped children with the kind of support, guidance, and education they need points out another critical area of in-service training that should be provided for educators.

3. *School systems must develop an organizational process* equipped to handle extensive and high quality in-service training pertaining directly to the educational service delivery provided handicapped children and youth, for its educational personnel. Those educators within the school systems designated as trainers and responsible for providing in-service training need to be informed and instructed on new and alternative approaches to in-service training, as well as to the content area being addressed.

4. *Higher education must assume its share of responsibility* in preparing educators to serve handicapped children and youth. Preparation must go beyond specialized degree programs if it is to assist school systems in their in-service training efforts. A crucial need that is consistently ignored, but is a natural function for higher education, is the training of trainers.

5. *In-service training activities must reflect collaboration of efforts* between school systems, higher education, and the service agencies, if quality educational services are to be provided handicapped children and youth. Collaborative activity relating to in-service training should occur in both planning and implementation efforts. It should encompass shared cost contributions, shared staff involvement, and shared program responsibility. ^{FL}

References

"Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975." Public Law 94-142. 94th Congress, S. 6, November 29, 1975.

"Education of Handicapped Children and Incentive Grants Program," Part IV. *Federal Register*. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Thursday, December 30, 1976.

GAO Report to Congress. *Training Educators for the Handicapped: A Need to Redirect Federal Programs*. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Comptroller General, 1976.

Jasper Harvey. "Future Trends in Personnel Preparation." *Exceptional Children* 43(3): 148-51; November, 1976.



Winifred I. Warnat is Professor of Education at the American University in Washington, D.C.

BUSINESS EDUCATION TEACHERS ...

Send today for a complete set of 150 competency-based instructional clerk typist materials. These materials can be used for a one-year block program or single courses of TYPING I, II, III, and IV. These materials are available at the low price of \$50 for 2 semesters, or \$25 for one semester. (1-75) or (76-150). These materials contain realistic up-to-date office tasks that can help prepare your students for the world of work.

I wish to order
_____ complete set (150 lessons) @ \$50
_____ half set @ \$25
_____ 1-75 or _____ 76-150 (313) 577 1609

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Make Check payable to
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
421D College of Education
Detroit, MI 48202

CBE CURRICULUM DESIGN CONSULTANT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU DEVELOP MEASURABLE PRODUCTS. Contact: Dr. Fred S. Cook or Ms. Gwen Hester at address above.

Yes, I am interested. Send me information on your consulting services.

Copyright © 1978 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.