**Inclusion** is perhaps the most feared and emotionally charged educational reform since passage of PL 94-142. Whether in formal debates at professional meetings or informal gatherings in teachers' lounges, nothing can divide a room of educators into two camps like discussions of inclusion. Yet, many of these debates are due to misunderstandings of the concept and how it is being implemented. For example, one physical educator told me how she found out that a student with severe physical disabilities would be included in her regular physical education program the day before he showed up! No one took the time to prepare her for this student or discuss his individual program. Another adapted physical educator told me how a student with a severe disability with whom she worked three times a week was suddenly cured when he was included in regular physical education! She was politely told that her services were no longer needed since this student would be fully included in the regular program! *This is not inclusion!*

**Why All Students with Disabilities Should be Included in Regular Physical Education**

*By Martin E. Block*

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Inclusion is not *dumping* students with disabilities into regular physical education without support or forcing students to fit into existing curricula designed for students without disabilities. Like mainstreaming, the term is being misused to describe any effort at placing students with disabilities into regular education, regardless of the quality of services provided within this placement. The purpose of this article is to re-introduce the term inclusion and explain how the concept of inclusion was meant to be implemented. Rationale will follow for why all 1 students with disabilities should be included in regular physical education. Practical mechanics of how to include students with disabilities in regular physical education is left to other resources (e.g., Block, 1994).

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion has been defined using the following parameters: (a) placing students with disabilities in their home schools (schools they would attend if they did not have a disability); (b) basing these students in age-appropriate, regular education classrooms, as opposed to special education classrooms; (c) placing these students in regular classrooms following the principle of natural proportions (i.e., in general, placing no more than 1-2 students with disabilities in any one regular class); and (d) providing supplementary aids and services in the form of individualized programming, support personnel, special instruction, and adapted materials within the regular setting (Block, 1994; Brown et al., 1991; Forest & Lusthaus, 1989; Lipsky & Gartner, 1991; Rogers, 1993;

Sailor, Gee, & Karasoff, 1993; Snell, 1991; Snell & Janey, in press; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Simply put, *inclusion* refers to providing specially designed instruction (including support services as needed) to students with disabilities within regular education environments (Giangreco & Putnam, 1991). With specific reference to physical education, inclusion is adapted physical education provided within the regular physical education setting.

Several key concepts should be clarified. *Supplementary aids and services* refers to resources such as school personnel, peer grouping, special equipment and materials, and various instructional adaptations that facilitate learning within the regular setting (Giangreco & Putnam, 1991; Rogers, 1993). Supplementary aids and services should be individually determined for each student with disabilities. For example, a student who is blind might need an orientation and mobility specialist to help him/her get acquainted with the gymnasium; a student with muscular dystrophy might need a lighter, shorter bat for softball; and a student with a learning disability might need extra instructions and feedback provided by a peer tutor.

*Individualized instruction* refers to addressing each student's educational needs via an individual education program (IEP) which reflects long term, top-down planning in prioritized curricular content and individually determined instructional methods delivered to the student in both school and community-based settings. As noted by Giangreco and Putnam (1991), a student with disabilities might follow curricular content that is basically the same for his/her nondisabled peers, or a student might follow a curriculum that is significantly different than that pursued by students without disabilities. For example, a high

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1Kauffman and Hallahan (1993) noted that the term *all* has been used to convey a variety of concepts from "unintelligible exclusions to extreme literalness" (p. 74). Use of the term *all* in this article refers to students with disabilities, including students with severe disabilities, who are placed in regular schools. A student who is placed in a hospital, separate day school, or residential facility due to severe physical, health, and/or behavioral problems does not constitute *all* in this definition. However, if these students return to regular schools, then these students can be included in regular physical education with an individual education program and individually prescribed support services. The debate as to who is placed in regular schools and who goes to separate facilities is left to other professionals.
Below, Trisha Zorn, USABA swimmer, has dominated swimming events for women athletes with blindness during the past four Paralympic Games. She is a good example of both inclusion in physical education classes and extra mural swimming competition, although she performs at an elite level for the USA in the Paralympic Games, a LRE placement.

9th Circuit Court of Appeals
Standard for Placements

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reiterated an earlier 11th Circuit decision in applying four factors to determine whether a placement meets least restrictive environment requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

- The student's educational benefit from full-time placement in a regular education classroom.
- Non-academic benefits of regular classroom placement.
- The child with a disability's effect on the rest of the class.
- Cost of a regular education placement with proper, supplementary aids and services.

school student who uses a wheelchair might have targeted goals that include participation in Wheelchair Sports, USA (WSUSA) tennis and National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) basketball, as well as participation in weight training, aerobic dance, and bowling at community-based facilities. When the regular physical education class is in a basketball unit, this student would participate with adaptations as needed (e.g., following rules of NWBA basketball, shooting at a lower basket, having minor rule changes to the game). On the other hand, when regular physical education activities do not match this student’s goals (e.g., when the regular class is engaged in wrestling and gymnastics), this student would follow different curricular content. Such alternative programming could take place within regular physical education in small subgroups with peers who need extra work on these goals (e.g., continue to work on tennis while others in the class are wrestling), or with a subgroup of peers at a community-based setting (e.g., teacher assistant supervises weekly outings to a local bowling facility).

It is also important to note that inclusion does not mean students with disabilities are confined to regular education classrooms (Brown et al., 1991; Sailor et al., 1986). As Brown et al. (1991) explained, based in refers to being a member of the regular education class, a place where one starts the school day and is an acknowledged and accepted member of the class. Students do not necessarily spend their entire school day with that class. Individually determined, meaningful amounts of time may be spent elsewhere, whether on school grounds or in the community (Block, 1992; Brown et al., 1991; Sailor et al., 1986; Snell & Janey, in press). However, such alternative programming should also include students without disabilities (see Block, 1992, and Krebs & Block 1992, for more detail).

Why Should all Students be Included?

Rationale #1: LRE and the Principle of Portability

Inclusion does not specifically appear in any federal law related to individuals with disabilities. However, the term has been used to interpret what many believe the least restrictive environment (LRE) doctrine within PL 101-476 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—IDEA) means or should mean (Rogers, 1993). Recall that LRE directs public schools to ensure that

To the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from regular education environments occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. 1415 [5][B]).

An inclusionary interpretation of LRE was upheld in at least one case (Roncker v. Walter [1983]) when courts determined efforts should be made to have services currently provided in segregated settings moved to integrated settings. This was referred
to as the principle of portability. In essence, the courts decreed that, whenever feasible, LRE should be placement in integrated settings (including regular physical education) with special services as needed brought to the student, rather than having the student brought to the services. It is the student who should be viewed as special, not the placement (Snell, 1993). As noted by Snell & Eichner (1989), "there is no program component or educational strategy that is provided in a segregated setting that cannot be implemented at least as effectively within local public schools" (pp. 109-110).

Many argue that LRE was and should be interpreted as a continuum of placement options, including segregated placements, designed to meet needs of students with disabilities (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1991; Grosse, 1991; Jansma & Decker, 1990; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1990; Lavay & DePaepe, 1987). Unfortunately, segregated placements often result in students with similar disabilities being grouped together (e.g., MR class). Such placements focus on one unique characteristic of the student (i.e., disability), ignoring individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, learning styles, and needs (Turnbull, 1990). In addition, a continuum of placements that includes total segregation as an option, while progressive and appropriate when first introduced (at the time, many students with disabilities were in hospitals and institutions and did not receive any educational services), does not promote the major goal of education today—to prepare students to live, work, and play in a variety of integrated, community-based settings (Block & Krebs, 1992; Lipsky & Gartner, 1991; Snell, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Taylor, 1988). Taylor (1988) in particular provided several problems with the principle of a continuum of placement options. Among other concerns, he noted that the continuum of placement options (a) confuses segregation and integration with intensity of services, (b) directs attention to physical settings rather than to services and supports, (c) is based on a readiness model that assumes a person graduates from segregated to integrated settings, and (d) assumes that instruc-

Again, it is important to point out that placement in regular physical education does not necessarily mean all students work on the same curriculum with the same resources. In some situations, students with disabilities might be working on different goals and objectives (e.g., working on learning how to walk while peers learn more advanced locomotor patterns) with different instruction (e.g., physical assistance, more explicit feedback, adapted equipment, smaller group instruction). In addition, there could be times when students receive physical education services elsewhere, such as community-based recreation settings with nondisabled peers.

Rationale #2: All Things Being Equal, Inclusion is Better Than Segregation

All things being equal (i.e., the quality and array of services available in segregated settings are available in inclusive settings), inclusive settings provide opportunities that

Tennis is an example of a sport activity wherein all students could successfully participate together with intelligent modification. PC: April Tripp/Don Rogers
Given appropriate resources, equipment, peer coaches, etc., this mixed sighted (pilot) and visually impaired team successfully trains and competes together. PC: Jeff Jones

are not available in separate settings. Such opportunities have been articulated by Brown et al. (1989, 1991), Guralnick (1976), Lipsky and Gartner (1991), Peck, Donaldson, and Pezzoli (1990), Snell and Eicher (1989), Snell and Janey (in press), Stainback and Stainback (1990), and Stainback, Stainback and Forest (1989), to name a few. They note benefits to (a) students with disabilities (e.g., more non-disabled role models and age-appropriate expectations) (b) typical students and the school community (e.g., better understanding and acceptance of individual differences), and (c) school staff (e.g., more awareness of individual differences in their typical children and development of strategies to accommodate these differences) (see Snell & Janey, in press, and Stainback, Stainback, and Forest, 1989 for more detail).

Furthermore, exclusion can have negative effects on students with disabilities, particularly when it comes to self-esteem (Brown et al., 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). As Justice Earl Warren noted when commenting on problems with racial segregation in the historic Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) case:

[Separateness in education can] generate a feeling of inferiority as to [children's] status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. This sense of inferiority... affects the motiva-

tion of a child to learn... [and] has a tendency to retard... educational and mental development (p. 493).

When decisions are made to exclude children with disabilities from regular physical education, possible benefits to separate programming must be weighed against potential negative effects of such exclusion (Brown et al., 1991; Turnbull, 1990).

Rationale #3: Inclusive Programs Can Actually Promote Better Instruction and Time on Task

Recently, this author has seen inclusive physical education programs that actually promoted more turns, more reinforcement, and even more direct instruction for students with disabilities than separate adapted physical education (Block & Bryan, 1993). In this particular program, five students with moderate to severe physical disabilities (some students needed physical assistance to perform virtually any activity) were included in regular physical education with support (adapted physical educator and teacher assistant, individual education plans, and adapted equipment) 2x per week, and received separate adapted physical education 1x per week. In separate adapted physical education, one adapted physical educator and one teacher assistant worked with these same five students. While the separate program was high quality, there were not enough hands to make sure all students remained on-task. For example, when the teacher and aid worked with two students, the other three took only one to two turns. Even using accommodations such as tying a string to a ball so the student could independently retrieve it did not reduce downtime. On the other hand, when these same five students were included in regular physical education, peers from the regular class were able to provide needed assistance.

Such assistance was provided without compromising the program for students without disabilities. For example, students without disabilities (as young as first grade) assisted peers who used wheelchairs in moving from one station to another. In separate adapted physical education, movement from station to station resulted in at least one student waiting.

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Similarly, students without disabilities picked up and handed balls to students who used wheelchair during throwing games (they would throw one or two balls, then hand a ball to the student who used a wheelchair), re-positioned targets for students to accommodate their lack of strength, and even provided physical assistance, cuing, and feedback (e.g., "bring your arm back, John...great throw!"). Besides extra turns and instruction, students with disabilities appeared to be more motivated in the inclusive setting. Thus, properly structured inclusive programs in which students are encouraged to be responsible for and accepting of classmates can actually be better than separate adapted physical education.

Rationale #4: Good Physical Education is Good Adapted Physical Education

Many regular physical education programs, arguably good physical education programs, already are individualized to meet the needs of the typical range of skills and abilities found in regular physical education (e.g., Langendorfer, 1985; Graham, Holt/Hale, Parker, 1993; Sherrill, 1993; Wessel & Kelly, 1986). As Langendorfer (1985) noted:

The existence of individual differences...mandates what teachers readily realize in the typical classroom or gymnasium situation; all children have varying styles and rates of performance and learning. The inclusion of those persons labeled as handicapped, disabled, delayed, or just plain different is a simple extension of the educational realization of individual differences. The presence of persons in a group with more apparent differences doesn't alter the basic fact that differences were there all along. It simply forces the teacher and learners to better face those differences. (p. 177)

Interestingly, many regular physical education texts discuss ways to individualize programs for typically heterogeneous grouped regular physical education classes (e.g., Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 1993; Nichols, 1990; Pangrazi & Dauer, 1992). With the addition of supplementary aids and services, such programs and the teachers who run these programs can accommodate students with disabilities. For example, Nichols (1990) suggested that students with varying abilities could be accommodated by presenting (a) a wide range of activities that fit the varied abilities of each student, (b) a progression in learning to guarantee the success of each student, and (c) information specific techniques for accommodating varying abilities, including (a) teaching by invitation in which students get to determine some of the parameters of a given task (e.g., target distances, ball sizes, striking implements, working alone or in small groups), and (b) intratask variations in which the teacher makes decisions on how to extend a task for individuals or small groups within the class (e.g., some students work on hitting a ball off a tee while others hit pitched balls, some students work on skipping while others work on jumping or hopping). Sounds a lot like good adapted physical education! Yet these suggestions were reflective of good physical education programs designed to accommodate students without disabilities. Such accommodations also allow students with disabilities to participate more successfully and meaningfully in regular physical education.

Conclusion

Why should all students be included in regular physical education? PL 101-476 suggests that the question be phrased differently—under what circumstances can we justify removing a student from regular physical education? When the student needs an individual program that is different than the regular curriculum? Not necessarily. Students with disabilities can receive an individualized program within the regular setting. As noted, good physical education actually is individualized for all students. When the student needs extra assistance and adapted equipment? Not necessarily. By law, support services in most cases are portable and can be provided within the regular setting? When regular physical education is so poor that it does not accommodate individual differences? No, if roll out the ball physical education does not accommodate students with disabilities, I doubt that it accommodates many students without disabilities! And in some cases, the person who is conducting the poor regular physical education program is conducting an equally poor separate adapted physical education program! No, if regular physical education programs do not accommodate individual differences, then in-service programs and on-going,
extra support should be provided to change these programs. Changes can benefit all students, not just students with disabilities. Poor physical education programs should be identified and changed, but they should not be used as an excuse for excluding students with disabilities.

All students with disabilities should be included in regular physical education; that is, they should be based in regular physical education and welcomed by the regular physical education teacher and students without disabilities. These students should continue to receive a specially designed program that can be carried out in regular physical education with special support services as needed. And on occasion, students with disabilities, as well as students without disabilities can receive physical education services in other settings, such as in smaller groups or in community recreation settings. For example, a student with severe autism who cannot handle the stimulation of a large group could receive part of his/her physical education in smaller group situations with select peers without disabilities. But if we expect this student to learn how to handle larger groups (more typical of recreation settings), then he/she will have to be weaned into regular physical education. A student who is disruptive and dangerous to him/herself and others could begin in regular physical education with a teacher assistant and then go out as needed. Again, this student, as well as his/her peers, will have to learn how to live, work, and play together, so plans to increase time in regular physical education should be developed. A high school student with severe cerebral palsy should go out to community recreation environments as part of a transition program. Such outings should include students without disabilities who would benefit from such instruction. Yes, all children should and can be included in regular physical education. Adjustments will have to be made, but good physical education, with supplementary aids and services, can accommodate all students.

Selected References


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