

**The Special Education
CONSULTANT TEACHER**

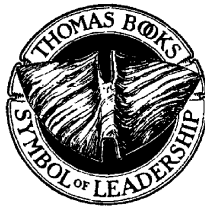
The Special Education CONSULTANT TEACHER

**Enabling Children with Disabilities to
be Educated with Nondisabled Children to the
Maximum Extent Appropriate**

By

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PREFACE

Special education is slowly evolving from a **place where services are provided to services provided in the least restrictive environment** with an emphasis on the regular classroom and the regular classroom curriculum. For every child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (DEA) amendments of 1997 the presumed placement is the regular classroom, and a child can be removed from the regular classroom only if special education services and accommodations (i.e., supplementary aids and services) are not successful.

In order to achieve successful regular classroom participation for children with disabilities with supplementary aids and services, consultant teacher services are essential. Just as the function of special education from a place to a service is changing, so too is the role of the special education teacher from that of a self-contained classroom teacher to a very versatile professional providing direct teaching in the regular classroom and indirect supportive services to promote regular classroom participation.

The Special Education CONSULTANT TEACHER: Enabling Children with Disabilities to be Educated with Nondisabled Children to the Maximum Extent Appropriate is intended for special education teachers and other professionals providing special education services with information, guidelines, and suggestions relating to the role and responsibilities of the special education consultant teacher. Every state must provide a continuum of alternative placements (e.g., regular classroom, resource room, self-contained setting), but the focus of this guide is participation in the regular classroom and/or regular curriculum “to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.”

This handbook is comprised of several parts. Part I deals with basic consultant teacher responsibilities and regulatory concerns; Part II focuses on planning, individualized planning and IEP consultant teacher services; Part III outlines the various consultant teacher indirect services, and Part IV describes direct consultant teacher services; Part V concerns the importance of the regular classroom and the regular classroom teacher for the consultant teacher; Part VI identifies the many Least Restrictive Environment, inclusion and mainstreaming issues important to the consultant teacher, and Part VII addresses the varied supervisory and job responsibilities of the consultant teacher.

In many ways this is simply an “idea” book comprised of many suggestions concerning what the special education consultant teacher can and should do to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children. But no matter whether the special education teacher is called a consultant teacher, consulting teacher, mainstreaming teacher, inclusion specialist, special education consultant teacher, or simply special education teacher, direct and indirect services provided to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children is how special education becomes a service rather than a place, and how children with disabilities are educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

E. B.

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**The Special Education
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Part I

Basic Consultant Teacher Services

The special education consultant teacher's goal: to provide services to enable successful participation in the regular classroom to the maximum extent appropriate.

CONSULTANT TEACHER SERVICES

We note that these experts challenged the School District's view that readiness for mainstreaming or inclusion could successfully be developed within a desegregated setting and argued that it is illusory and perhaps even pretextual, to contend that segregation can breed readiness for inclusion.'

To some degree every special education teacher will provide consultant teacher services for children with disabilities to maximize each child's participation in the regular classroom and regular curriculum. For every child with a disability who needs special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments of 1997, the presumed setting for services and accommodations is the regular classroom. When a child with a disability cannot be educated successfully in the regular classroom, an alternative placement might be necessary. Nonetheless, for children who do require an alternative placement, education with nondisabled children is required to the maximum extent appropriate. The primary role of the consultant teacher is to enable children with disabilities to successfully participate in regular education classes and the regular curriculum.

The Mainstreaming Requirement

The courts have interpreted the least restrictive environment clause as Congress' "strong preference in favor of mainstreaming" (Daniel v. State Board of Education, P. 1044).

The Senate Report (SR 105-17) for IDEA refers to "a presumption that children with disabilities are to be educated in regular classes" (SR 105-17).

The IDEA mandates that children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that the removal of children with disabilities from the regular education classes occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of the supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. 1412[a][5][A]).

The work of the consultant teacher centers about the education of children with disabilities with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. This is accomplished by providing direct (viz., teaching in the regular classroom) and indirect services (e.g., support for the regular classroom teacher) to enable participation in the regular classroom and/or regular curriculum.

Although the task is to provide direct and indirect services, the consultant teacher is also involved in developing pre-referral interventions “to reduce the need to label children as disabled in order to address their learning needs,”² assisting children with disabilities who have disabilities but do not need special education (and therefore are not served under IDEA), and for children who have been declassified.

The consultant teacher must meet the many diverse activities required to implement the least restrictive environment or mainstreaming provision of IDEA. Whether the task is to enable a student to participate in a regular third grade classroom, high school biology class, or to enable a student in a self-contained classroom to participate in regular seventh grade social studies curriculum, the consultant teacher is responsible for providing “the full range” of direct and indirect services to maximize classroom and curriculum participation.

Every special education teacher should be involved in enabling children with disabilities to be involved in the regular classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. What distinguishes the consultant teacher from a special education teacher in a resource room setting, a self-contained classroom, or a residential setting is the emphasis on the regular classroom and the regular curriculum. The consultant teacher’s focus is entirely on maximizing participation in the regular classroom and the general curriculum. To this end the consultant teacher might work in the regular classroom on a one-to-one basis, or with all children in the regular classroom to achieve this goal. In other situations the consultant teacher might observe a child’s regular classroom behavior, plan and collaborate with the regular classroom teacher, design a plan with the classroom teacher to manage classroom behavior, or to provide and supervise general classroom and curriculum accommodations. When appropriate, the consultant teacher might provide services to children with disabilities in more restrictive settings that will result in regular classroom and general curriculum participation.

Keep an eye on the ball. Consultant teaching is not about the consultant teacher; consultant teaching is about enabling children with disabilities to function as independently as possible in the regular classroom. If the consultant teacher always provides the same service, always provides a set amount of instructional support in the classroom, and never seeks to increase independent classroom performance, the services provided might be excellent when considered in isolation, but certainly not effective if the goal of successful classroom performance is not advanced.

A SERVICE AND NOT A PLACE

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

Brown v. Board of Education

Special education is not a place and not an alternative to the regular classroom. True, a child might require an alternative setting but this is neither the purpose or the intent of special education. Special education has a very unique responsibility which, sadly enough, has often been misunderstood or simply ignored. In *Brown v. the Board of Education* the Warren court declared that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.” Special education is founded in this seminal civil rights landmark case. No child, regardless of race or disability, should be segregated.

But special education presents a bit of dilemma when the appropriateness of a segregative environment is considered. For some children with disabilities a separate environment or facility might be appropriate and might actually prevent discrimination by providing *appropriate* services and an appropriate educational program. Special education provides a legal by-pass to the *Brown* decision by permitting a segregative placement because such a placement is thought to best meet a child’s needs.

How does special education reconcile the possible need for a segregative setting with mandate by the Warren court in *Brown* that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal?” The only way to overcome this Supreme Court hurdle is by mandating that removal from regular classes is as least restrictive as possible and that children are educated in regular classes to the maximum extent appropriate. This is no trivial matter and ignoring this basic tenet of IDEA can result in blatant discrimination. Every teacher who provides consultant teacher services is entrusted with the fundamental obligation to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. If a student with a disability is capable of participating in high school math but the student’s placement does not provide high school math, the placement is discriminatory. If a child is able to participate in the regular classroom fifty percent each day,