Preservice Training of Teachers for Mainstreaming Handicapped Students

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PRESERVICE TRAINING OF TEACHERS FOR MAINSTREAMING
HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

by
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B.S., College of St. Teresa, 1974

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of
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for the Degree
Master of Science

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This thesis submitted by Janine Dahms Walker in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

Lloyd W. Ayers
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Dean
School of Graduate and Continuing Studies
This study examined student teachers' perception of their training program coverage of knowledge and skills necessary to accommodate handicapped students in the regular classroom. Students indicated through surveys the degree of coverage of skills and knowledge and whether they felt sufficient knowledge was obtained. The return rate was 53% with scores ranging from 22% to 72% across both measures.

Elementary majors and students with at least one course in special education were more positive about their training programs. Secondary majors and students with no special education course work were less positive about their training programs. The data demonstrated that even with a mandated emphasis on mainstreaming handicapped children in the schools, regular classroom teachers lack preservice preparation to work with these students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the following people for assisting me in completion of this study. Special thanks are due to my adviser, Dr. Floyd Ayers, for his continuing encouragement, assistance, and unique sense of humor.

Special thanks to my closest friend, Greg, for his support and understanding in completing this study.

Finally, thanks to Jesse and Dylan for giving up some special time so that I could achieve this goal.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** ................................................................................. v

**Chapter**

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
   Literature Review .......................................................... 2
   Summary ....................................................................... 9

II. METHOD .......................................................... 11

III. RESULTS ............................................................... 14
   Adequacy of Coverage Results and Interpretation .. 15
   Training Background Components ....................... 21

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS ....................... 25
   Critique ....................................................................... 25
   Conclusions and Recommendations ..................... 26
   Summary ..................................................................... 28

**REFERENCES** ......................................................................... 29

**APPENDIXES**

A. Correlation of Scales .................................................... 34

B. Sufficient Knowledge Attained ................................. 36

C. Survey Instrument ...................................................... 39
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                                   Page
1. Degree Skills Were Covered                           16
2. Rank Order of Knowledge Versus Skills                20
3. Training Background Components                      22
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The "Education for All Handicapped Act" of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) requires adherence to the least restrictive environment for placement of handicapped children. The result has been an emphasis on placement options centering on retention in the regular class, commonly referred to as mainstreaming. Educationally, it is based on the premise that all children, including the handicapped, should be educated in a manner that does not inhibit their interaction with peers (Meyen & Lehr, 1980). Turnbull and Turnbull (1978), in describing the history of mainstreaming, state that it promotes the concept that curriculum adaptations and instructional strategies tailored to the needs of exceptional children can occur in regular classrooms. Mainstreaming can have many positive effects on handicapped children, but must be accompanied by adequate teacher training and support services (Ziegler & Muenchow, 1979).

One of the concerns of special educators is whether classroom teachers have the competencies to accommodate handicapped students in their classrooms. As a former classroom teacher, my undergraduate training did not prepare me to handle children other than the "norm." It was only as a graduate student in learning disabilities that I began to acquire the skills to work with handicapped mainstream
students in my regular classroom. In my subsequent role as a Learning Disabilities Consultant, I encountered many teachers with the same inadequate preparations.

When I graduated from college, P.L. 94-142 had not been enacted. With the advent of its passage in 1975, handicapped students were assimilated into regular classrooms from previously isolated special education programs. Whether undergraduate teacher programs modified their curriculum was of interest to me for the development of my own knowledge. It may also assist the institution involved in this study in determining whether their graduates possess certain competencies. The question I investigated was, "Are undergraduate teacher programs teaching the skills necessary to effectively accommodate handicapped mainstream students in their classroom?"

Literature Review

During the first part of this century, it was generally believed that handicapped children were best cared for and educated separately from the rest of society. Special facilities and institutions isolated handicapped children and youth, often in a mere-care-taking role with little or no emphasis on education. Court decisions of the past 60 years have indicated a transition from this approval of separate facilities to demands for more normalized educational settings for handicapped students (Nyquist, Occasional Paper). In recent years, courts have increasingly emphasized the local school district's responsibility to provide appropriate programs for the handicapped within the public schools.
P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, mandated that all handicapped children must receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Educationally, it was based on the premise that all children should be instructed in a manner that does not inhibit their interaction with peers, nor employ unusual instructional arrangements (Meyen & Lehr, 1980). The handicapped student is mainstreamed into regular education.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1978) provide a framework that defines and explains mainstreaming.

... Mainstreaming is a method for individualizing an exceptional pupil's education, since it prevents a child being placed in special programs unless it is first determined that he cannot profit from regular education and placement. It simultaneously addresses the requirements of an appropriate education—an individualized education—and nondiscriminatory classification. It promotes the concept that curriculum strategies tailored to the needs of exceptional children can occur in regular classrooms, as well as in special classrooms...

The implementation of P.L. 94-142 and the corollary mandate to integrate handicapped students into the educational mainstream to the maximum extent feasible, placed new demands on the regular classroom teacher. New roles and functions must be defined for the mainstream educator. There have been numerous descriptions of the role and function of the regular education or mainstream teacher who has handicapped students in his/her classroom (Reynolds & Birch, 1977; Mori, 1978; Haisley & Gilberts, 1978).

In attempting to delineate the new roles required of the regular educator, Mori (1978) describes and clarifies seven roles. These include:
1. Facilitator of integration
2. Diagnoser of problems
3. Planner of instruction
4. Provider of learning experience
5. Evaluator of progress
6. Member of a treatment team
7. Helper of parents

Each of these roles were described and clarified by the functions accompanying the roles. Within the role of diagnoser of problems, Mori (1978) clarifies the functions of that role. Those include the classroom teachers' need to determine a learner's skill level attainment, interests, abilities, motivation and problem-solving ability. Further consideration must be given to individual learning styles and the rate at which the child is able to learn.

Reynolds (1978) defines the role of regular teacher in terms of needs. These included:

1. Need for preparation in efficient use of consultants
2. Need of orientation to the requirements of handicapped students in mainstream environments
3. Need to know how to make educational assessments and diagnoses
4. Need of more preparation to comply with P.L. 94-142 due process procedures.

Haisley and Gilberts (1978) believed good teachers have always used the essential teaching competencies required for successful implementation of the law. They have developed a set of checklists
of competencies to be included in inservice training for classroom teachers. Separate categories for knowledge and skills indicated minimal competencies for personnel training.

The literature identified many different emerging roles for the regular classroom teacher interfacing with handicapped students (Blankenshin & Lilly, 1977; Redden, 1976; Reynolds, 1978; Schenkat, 1978). There seemed to be one key factor common to the studies regarding components which make mainstreaming effective—the need for quality preservice teacher education.

Implementation of P.L. 94-142 has essentially one basic issue, the training of personnel to provide services in educational settings to assist handicapped children (Finkbeiner, Malian, Strunk, 1980). Corrigan (1978) discussed implications for preservice teacher education. He proposed:

Until educators get rid of the special education-regular education dualism in teacher education institutions, public schools will continue to mirror the same dualism. All teachers must be prepared to implement P.L. 94-142. Hence, we must reform all aspects of teacher education, not just special education departments.

Both regular and special educators must be knowledgeable in providing effective programs for handicapped students. They should have competencies in providing services to handicapped students in combined programs of regular education and special education services (Finkbeiner, Malian, Strunk, 1980). Reynolds (1978) suggested a new cooperative relationship is emerging in education. He states:

A major renegotiation of relations between special and regular education is occurring. Children are crossing old boundaries between special and regular education more often and more easily. Teachers are collaborating more frequently, but much training and retraining are needed.
Preservice teacher training or training of teachers before they move into positions of responsibility as deliverers of service to children was an area of concern in many states (Finkbeiner, Malian, & Strunk, 1980). Different skills and competencies were identified as essential for classroom teachers working with handicapped students.

There was general agreement on generic competencies common or characteristic of any person in an instructional position (Black, 1973; Stulac, 1978; Pattavina, 1980; Ingram, 1981).

Monaco and Chapetta (1978) ranked competencies as perceived by State Directors of Special Education necessary for all teachers instructing in mainstream classes, in addition to generic skills. Competencies beyond generic skills included individualizing instruction to meet the needs of their students, understanding abilities of handicapped students, and diagnosing and evaluating student needs and progress.

These competencies can be presented to teachers already in the field through inservice programs. Several authors have speculated that inservices could be implemented by consultants, administration, and local college faculty (Gage, 1979; Skindrud, 1978; Weisenstein & Gall, 1978).

One of the major areas of concern is how to integrate these skills into preservice teacher education. Paul (1977) suggested that the ultimate goal of mainstreaming teacher education would require the reorganization of the regular curriculum. The knowledge included should relate to teaching handicapped students in an integral and interwoven part of the skill development necessary to teach all students.
Vacc (1978) sampled 178 NCATE approved institutions of higher education and determined that regular teachers lack preservice preparation to work with handicapped mainstream students. Present programs do not have the time and resources necessary to prepare skilled teachers committed to the constructs of P.L. 94-142 (Reynolds, 1978).

A number of states have effected changes in teacher certification as a direct result of P.L. 94-142 (Robie, 1979; Pattavina, 1980). Currently, fifteen states require all preservice educators to be exposed to characteristics and needs of exceptional children, though only one state requires more than one course (Smith & Schindler, 1980).

There is wide disagreement whether the special education or regular education department should be responsible for the course content and which department should receive the credit hours (Sharp, 1978). Program redesign conflicts with traditional university values of autonomy and independence through individual accomplishment in publications, research, and grant writing (Weisenstein & Gall, 1980; Reynolds, 1978). Program redesign should address these conflicts. Many professors believe that inclusion of mainstreaming content in a teacher education curriculum requires an expanded program (Weisenstein & Gall, 1978). Some faculty members who participated in creating existing teacher education curriculum view programs redesign as unnecessary or as a criticism, and may be uncertain of their ability to teach in a new program focusing on mainstreaming (Weisenstein & Gall, 1980).
Considering the difficult nature of change, and the new roles of college faculty as a result of P.L. 94-142, there has been minimal restructuring of preservice teacher education to include mainstreaming skills. The Bureau of Education (BEH) and congressional support has made modest sums of money available for encouraging development in teacher education.

BEH awarded Deans Grants to assist higher education institutions in adapting and improving preservice teacher education to include mainstreaming. The Deans Grant projects developed a variety of process strategies to overcome the inherent obstacles to change. The strategy objectives, staff and curriculum development, covered seven areas (Weisenstein & Gall, 1980).

1. Open Lines of Communication
2. Create Ownership in Program Change
3. Retrain Faculty
4. Develop Instructional Materials
5. Create Pay-off for Faculty
6. Facilitate Teaming Arrangements
7. Participate in National Support Network.

Results have been dramatic from the participants, with education faculty staff much more knowledgeable about mainstreaming. The Deans Grants have been the impetus for some change, and mainstreaming competencies should be reflected by the graduating teachers in their regular classrooms.

There is a continued need for change in preservice teacher education to accommodate handicapped students. Deans Grants were
one partially successful method, though further assistance was found necessary. Sharp (1978) summarized the additional needs.

Further support to assist in development, as well as initial implementation of the developments, will be needed from BEH. Support for leadership development, the installation or institutionalization of development/change, and evaluation of the overall effects of P.L. 94-142 on the education of handicapped and other children and youths should be high priorities for BEH in the next several years.

Summary
Philosophies of education for the handicapped have changed throughout this century. With the advent of P.L. 94-142 passed in 1975, handicapped children and youth had all the privileges of public education mandated to them by law. The least restrictive environment principle placed many of these students in contact with regular educators who had little skill in working with them.

Educators and administrators took on new roles and functions, and with these came responsibilities requiring new skills. Inservice training has provided some of these skills to teachers in the field, but the major responsibility remains with teacher training institutions.

Higher institutions of education, traditionally slow to incorporate change, have been reluctant to include mainstreaming skills in their curriculum. The dilemma involves determining responsibility for presenting the skills: whether special or regular education staff include the skills in existing classes or whether new classes should be established.

The Deans Grant from BEH was one possible solution to encourage staff and curriculum development in preservice teacher education. It
involved the total education faculty in the inclusion of mainstreaming constructs within the training program.

There is a continued need for development and evaluation of the developmental efforts, along with the evaluation of the overall effects of P.L. 94-142.
Chapter II

METHOD

With the increased public and professional sensitivity toward the handicapped and their needs, a logical implication is that teacher training institutions have changed their curriculum to include new competencies. That would include skills that would enable regular teachers to adapt their curriculum and manage handicapped students in their classrooms. If the competencies are taught, do graduating teachers feel confident utilizing these skills in classroom situations?

To investigate whether teacher training programs present the skills necessary to effectively accommodate handicapped mainstream students in their classroom, a compilation of these skills was developed. From these competencies, a survey was developed. The survey measured the student teachers perceptions of degree of coverage and whether sufficient knowledge was attained.

The sample population included undergraduate education majors from St. Cloud State University. This is a public multi-purpose and comprehensive institution located in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Its student population is drawn primarily from Minnesota public and private high schools. It is a college for the St. Cloud area and one of six state universities that offer a broad range of undergraduate
and graduate programs. The total undergraduate population was 9,285 with 600 of those officially admitted to the teacher education program. There were 114 students completing their student teaching during spring quarter 1984.

The survey was given to student teachers who were completing their field experiences during spring quarter 1984. It was given to the sample population by their supervising instructors. Students completed the survey indicating the degree of coverage and whether sufficient knowledge was obtained for the skill and knowledge areas. Students indicated their training program background in two areas: (1) whether they had taken at least one class in special education, and (2) area of specialization (elementary or secondary majors).

The survey was pre-tested on the elementary and junior high teaching staff of Albany Public Schools, Albany, Minnesota. Pre-test subjects were encouraged to make comments and suggestions concerning directions, recording procedures and specific items. Proposed data tabulation and analysis procedures were applied to the pre-test data. The revised instrument was given to the student teachers completing their student teaching spring quarter 1984.

The response rate for each item and total sample size was listed. Results were presented listing the percentage of respondents indicating whether coverage was adequate and whether sufficient knowledge was attained for each item. Relationships between variables were investigated by comparing responses on both scales of measurement, and training background. This relationship analysis was used to test the hypotheses.
Some aspects of the study that may have negatively affected the results seem apparent. The skills that students perceive they have may differ from what they actually possess. A competency may have been taught, yet the student may have failed to retain the knowledge or skill.

The results cannot be generalized to any other teacher training institute, and their interpretation by the participating program is limited. Establishment of a direct cause-effect relationship between training and competencies would not be warranted.
Chapter III

RESULTS

On April 23, 1984, 98 surveys were distributed to seven student teachers supervisors at St. Cloud State University. Included with the surveys were self-addressed, stamped envelopes to be mailed by the student teachers completing the survey. By the first cut-off date of May 15, 1984, 37 surveys were returned. Contact was made with the Coordinator of Field Experiences who gave assurances that all the surveys had been distributed to the supervisors. After the follow-up contact, 13 more surveys were returned. By June 30, 1984, 52 surveys had been returned and none came in after that date. The total return rate was 53.6%.

The surveys were brought to the computer center at St. Cloud State University and tabulated for descriptive statistics. An ANOVA was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Adequacy of preparation as perceived by the student teachers was examined in two different ways; the degree of skill coverage and whether sufficient knowledge was attained. The two independent ratings correlated highly suggesting similarity between the judgments. These two measures correlated at .899 (see Appendix A). In the following discussion, the degree of coverage scale was employed since the other scale, sufficient knowledge attained, gave comparable information (see Appendix B).
The 24 items were rank ordered with regard to the students indicating whether the skill and knowledge areas were adequately covered in their undergraduate training program. Students rated degree of coverage from 0 to 4, and adequate coverage was determined by ratings of 3 and 4.

The scores ranged from 22% to 64% of the respondents indicating coverage was adequate in their training programs. The ranked items were grouped in fifths in Table 1.

The top fifth of the items ranged from 52% to 64% of the respondents indicating coverage was adequate in their training programs. These skill and knowledge items included the teacher's role in mainstreaming, interpretation of P.L.94-142, knowledge of behavior management techniques and keeping records of individual student progress. The best score in this group indicated that three out of five respondents perceived that their undergraduate training program adequately covered these topics.

The second fifth of the items were all at the same level, 48% of the respondents indicating coverage was adequate in their training programs. These skill and knowledge items included identifying students with learning and behavior problems, knowledge and understanding of handicapped students, and identifying curriculum modifications to accommodate handicapped students. In this group, 48% of the respondents indicated that their undergraduate training program adequately covered these areas. The primary referral source of students to special education is the classroom teacher, yet the
Table 1
Degree Skills Were Covered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank Order</th>
<th>% Adequate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 d.</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 c.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 a.</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 a.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 c.</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 a.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 a.</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 b.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 b.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 c.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 b.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 c.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 a.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 d.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
knowledge necessary for referral services was perceived to be adequ-ately covered by only 48% of the respondents. In this same group, 48% of the respondents indicated their training programs adequately covered identifying academic and behavioral requirements for all students in their classrooms. Special educators expect mainstream teachers to identify modifications necessary to accommodate handicapped students.
The middle fifth of the items ranged from 38% to 44% of the respondents indicated coverage was adequate in their training programs. These skill and knowledge items included describing learning and behavior problems through observation, skills in assessing individual educational needs, knowledge of specialists to assist with special education, skills to function as a team member, and knowledge of diverse models for individualized instruction. Classroom teachers are expected to be able to describe learning and behavior problems, refer to specialists and function as a team member in planning the student's educational program. However, only about two out of five respondents indicated these areas were adequately covered.

The next fifth ranged from 30% to 36% of the respondents indicated coverage was adequate in their training programs. These skill and knowledge items included knowledge of group learning strategies, knowledge of consultation skills, and curriculum modification skills to accommodate handicapped students. Before a referral is processed, classroom teachers are encouraged to try different learning strategies in conjunction with curriculum modification for handicapped students. Consultation with special education staff may be necessary to implement the modifications. However, fewer than two out of five respondents felt these areas were adequately covered.

The bottom fifth of the items ranged from 22% to 28% of the respondents indicated coverage was adequate in their training programs. These skill and knowledge items included knowledge of procedures to assess needs of handicapped students, skills in gathering and reporting evaluative data, and skills in modifying evaluation
materials for handicapped students. Classroom teachers must be able to prepare reports of student progress for special education staff to utilize in individualized educational plans (IEP). Only one out of five respondents indicated that they were adequately prepared in their training programs in these areas.

Student teachers indicated they were most adequately prepared in procedural items. These items included knowledge of P.L. 94-142, concepts and rationale of mainstreaming, and knowledge of behavioral and academic requirements for handicapped students. They indicated less adequate coverage in their training program in the actual practice of these skills. On 19 of the 24 items, less than 50% of the respondents felt they were adequately prepared in their training programs.

Some of the low preparation perception items may be skills that the student teachers are actually doing, but feel less confident about because it forces them to make decisions about students. It is not that they do not have the skills, but they are uncomfortable proceeding in those areas.

The student teachers indicated more adequate coverage in knowledge and awareness areas, and less adequate coverage in actual practice or skill areas (see Table 2).

Individual items on the survey were divided into two areas: knowledge and understanding, and skills or actual practice. The mean score for knowledge and understanding items was 45% of the respondents indicating coverage was adequate. The mean score for skill and actual practice items was 35% of the respondents indicating coverage was adequate.
Table 2

Rank Order of Knowledge Versus Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents indicating a rating of 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>Respondents indicating a rating of 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>1a</td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1d</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
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<td>2a</td>
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<td>2b</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3a</td>
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<td>3c</td>
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<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4a</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
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<td>5b</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<td>5c</td>
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<tr>
<td>6a</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>28%</td>
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<td>8b</td>
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<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>45.60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Mean</td>
<td>41.75%</td>
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The knowledge and understanding items that were ranked highest included procedural concepts of P.L. 94-142 (60-64%), identifying special education students (48%), and describing modifications to accommodate these students (48%). The lowest range of scores in the knowledge areas were classroom management strategies (34%) and assessing handicapped needs (28%). The skill and actual practice items that were ranked highest included record keeping (52%), assessing individual educational needs (44%) and skills to describe learning and behavior problems through systematic observation. The lowest range of scores in the skill areas were modifying evaluation materials for handicapped students (24%) and reporting evaluative data to other professionals (22%). These skills are essential in the determination of student functioning levels, yet only one out of five respondents indicated coverage was adequate in their training program.

**Training Background Components**

The second feature of the analysis involved comparison of elementary versus secondary majors, and students with at least one special education class versus students with no special education classes. Group differences were examined by an ANOVA. Four sets of comparisons were made:

1. Elementary versus secondary on the degree of coverage scale on all 24 items.

2. Special education class(es) versus no special education classes on the degree of coverage scale on 17 out of 24 items.
(3) Elementary versus secondary on the sufficient knowledge scale for all 24 items.

(4) Special education class(es) versus no special education classes on the sufficient knowledge scale for all 24 items.

The results of these comparisons are summarized in Table 3. The significance level chosen was .05.

Table 3
Training Background Components

---

**Degree of Coverage Scale**

(1) Elementary versus secondary  
24 of 24 items were significant with elementary more positive

(2) Special education training* versus no special education training  
17 of 24 items were significant with special education training more positive

**Sufficient Knowledge Scale**

(3) Elementary versus secondary  
12 of 24 items were significant with elementary more positive

(4) Special education training versus no special education training  
5 of 24 items were significant with special education training more positive

*Special education training means the student had completed one or more courses in special education.

On 24 items there was a significant difference between elementary and secondary majors with elementary majors more positive on the degree of coverage scale. Elementary majors perceived their training programs covered skills and knowledge more adequately.
Ratings were higher for students with special education training than students with no special education training for 17 of the 24 items on the degree of coverage scale. Students with special education training responded more positively across all items except those skills involved in consultation, classroom management, and curriculum modification.

On the sufficient knowledge attained scale, ratings were higher for elementary majors than secondary majors on 12 of the 24 items. The areas elementary majors felt they had attained sufficient knowledge in were handicap laws, referral to special education, and evaluating classroom progress.

Ratings were higher for students with special education training than students with no special education training on the sufficient knowledge attained scale for 5 of the 24 items. Students with special education training felt they had sufficient knowledge in handicap laws, implications of handicapped and partial knowledge in assessing handicapped needs.

There was general agreement on both measures of degree of coverage and sufficient knowledge attained scales. Students with special education training and elementary majors responded on both scales more positively than secondary majors or students with no special education training.

The special education/no special education classes dichotomy probably paralleled the elementary/secondary major dichotomy since elementary majors were more likely to have taken at least one special education class.
It may be true that several of the knowledge and skill areas were not as relevant for secondary majors as they were for elementary majors. For instance, referral procedures may not be as useful for secondary majors since the majority of handicapped students are identified and referred during their elementary careers.

Elementary majors felt more positive and knowledgeable about special education services as a result of their training program experiences. The secondary majors rating of sufficient knowledge in many of these skill areas may have been due to their belief that they would not need much of this information in their future teaching situations.

Students with special education training indicated referral procedures were more familiar to them than students who had no special education training. Curriculum and group management skills were rated more positively by students with special education training. Secondary majors with no special education training felt they had sufficient knowledge in many areas. They may perceive that their limited knowledge is sufficient for future teaching situations.

Overall, the elementary majors were also more comfortable with the information about referral and due process procedures for handicapped students than were secondary majors. The differences between elementary and secondary majors may reflect the differences in terms of specialization between the two groups. Elementary education majors receive a diverse background in skills and content areas for elementary students. Secondary majors have a strong specialization and extensive knowledge about a particular curriculum area.
Chapter IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Critique

This study has several limitations. A major problem was the method of distribution of the surveys. The system lacked any type of feedback so that the experimenter was not able to identify cooperating student teacher supervisors and therefore ask for further follow-up. Surveys were given to the secretaries of the teacher development office to be distributed to the supervisors. One supervisor returned after spring quarter ended to find the surveys on her desk. A better distribution method would have been to give the surveys directly to the individual supervisors.

The spring quarter timing of the survey may also have reduced the number of responses to the survey. The end of spring quarter and the academic school year involve many responsibilities for student teacher supervisors, and may have resulted in surveys being misplaced. These limitations on the return rate of the survey will require that these results be interpreted cautiously.

One possibility was that students may have seen the survey as an opportunity to provide a critique of their training program rather than responding to the content of the survey.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Students made two judgments on all survey items: (1) whether it was covered, and (2) whether sufficient knowledge was attained. The scores ranged from 22% to 64% of the respondents indicating adequate coverage. The average score for all knowledge and skill areas was 41%. Less than half of the respondents felt their training programs adequately covered items necessary to successfully accommodate handicapped students in regular classrooms.

Educators are in the midst of a new era precipitated by the passage of P.L. 94-142. It requires regular school environments to provide for a greater diversity of students who will need a wider variety of learning experiences. Training programs need to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to develop and practice skills to accommodate handicapped students. Specifically, student teachers should be encouraged to participate in referrals to special education. Reviewing student records, gathering informal assessment data, identifying student strengths and weaknesses and relaying this information in a team planning process would be practical experience for future educators. Opportunities for modifying curriculum and classroom activities to accommodate all students should be provided. Different learning strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, highlighting and color coding texts should be skills required for all educators to facilitate many learning styles.

If these experiences are not available at student teaching sites, practice opportunities should be provided the student teacher.
during methods and materials classes. Perhaps the methods and materials classes will need to be updated to ensure that they include current practices for working with handicapped students.

It is clear that the knowledge and skill areas reflected in the survey are not currently being attained by the student teachers. The knowledge and skill areas in the survey may serve as a guide for revising methods and materials classes, and student teaching experiences.

Student teachers indicated on the survey they were more confident in describing modifications, but less confident in actually implementing the modifications. They need to be given many opportunities to describe and actually implement suggested changes in curriculum for handicapped students.

Implementation of these suggestions would benefit all concerned. Special education would have fewer but more appropriate referrals to process. Teachers would have many strategies to draw on to accommodate handicapped students in their classrooms. Regular and special education would share responsibility for handicapped students, both modifying curriculum and strategies. Most importantly, all students would be given a better opportunity for success in the regular classroom, and a more positive self concept in their ability to achieve.

The essence of P.L. 94-142 is to accommodate handicapped students in the least restrictive environment. To fulfill this goal, regular educators need the knowledge, skills, and confidence to address the educational requirements for all handicapped students.
in the regular classroom.

Summary

This study examined student teachers' perception of their training program coverage of knowledge and skills necessary to accommodate handicapped students in the regular classroom. Students indicated through surveys the degree of coverage of skills and knowledge and whether they felt sufficient knowledge was obtained. The return rate was 53% with scores ranging from 22% to 72% across both measures.

Elementary majors and students with at least one course in special education were more positive about their training programs. Secondary majors and students with no special education course work were less positive about their training programs. The data demonstrated that even with a mandated emphasis on mainstreaming handicapped children in the schools, regular classroom teachers perceive that they lack preservice preparation to work with these students.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

Correlation of Scales
Correlation of Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Degree of Coverage Adequate (% of respondents indicating a positive response)</th>
<th>Sufficient Knowledge Attained (% of respondents indicating a positive response)</th>
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Correlation calculated between two columns $r = .899$. 
APPENDIX B

Sufficient Knowledge Attained
## Sufficient Knowledge Attained

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<th>Order</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 d.</td>
<td>Understands teacher's role in mainstreaming</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 c.</td>
<td>Can interpret &quot;least restrictive environment&quot;</td>
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<td>Knowledge of behavior management techniques</td>
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<td>Can identify students with learning and behavior problems who may be in need of special education</td>
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<td>6 c.</td>
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<td>Basic understanding of exceptional children</td>
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<td>7 b.</td>
<td>Skills in modifying classroom activities to meet the needs of students with handicaps</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7 c.</td>
<td>Skills for keeping records of individual progress toward objectives</td>
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<td>3 b.</td>
<td>Can describe modifications to accommodate students with handicaps within the educational environment for which you are responsible</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>3 c.</td>
<td>Knowledge of specialists available to assist with special education needs</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>2 b.</td>
<td>Skills to objectively describe learning and behavioral problems through systematic observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4 a.</td>
<td>Skills needed to function effectively as a member of a multidisciplinary team</td>
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<td>16.5</td>
<td>5 b.</td>
<td>Skills to organize a barrier-free physical environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>5 c.</td>
<td>Knowledge of group strategies that encourage cooperative behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>7 d.</td>
<td>Knowledge about diverse models for individualized instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>8 b.</td>
<td>Skills to report data on student progress to other professional personnel</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>8 a. Skills in compiling evaluative data on each student with a handicap</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>6 a. Knowledge of appropriate procedures for assessing the educational needs of students with handicaps</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1 b. Can explain major concepts of Section 504</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument
Please read the attached list carefully. Your opinion is important. We need to know how well you feel these skills were covered in your undergraduate work and whether you feel you have sufficient knowledge in these areas.

AREA OF SPECIALIZATION:

___ Elementary
___ Secondary

List major ________________________________

Have you ever had any Special Education courses?
___ Yes  ___ No

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read each item and check the appropriate number that best describes how well that skill was covered in your undergraduate work.

   0 - not covered at all

   1 - barely mentioned

   2 - slightly covered

   3 - adequately covered

   4 - completely covered

2. Indicate whether you feel you have sufficient knowledge in each skill area by marking YES or NO.

THANK YOU!

To be returned to:

JANINE DAHMS WALKER
323 WEST MINNESOTA
PO BOX 663
SAINT JOSEPH, MN 56374
### TEACHER PERCEPTION OF SKILL LEVEL AND PREPARATION (for teaching handicapped students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Skill Covered (in teacher preparation)</th>
<th>Sufficient Knowledge Attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not covered</td>
<td>barely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **HANDICAP LAWS:**
   - a. can explain major concepts of P.L. 94-142
   - b. can explain major concepts of Section 504
   - c. can interpret "least restrictive environment"
   - d. understands teacher's role in mainstreaming

2. **REFERRAL TO SPECIAL EDUCATION:**
   - a. can identify students with learning and behavior problems who may be in need of special education
   - b. skills to objectively describe learning and behavioral problems through systematic observation

3. **IMPLICATIONS OF HANDICAPPED:**
   - a. basic understanding of exceptional children
   - b. can describe modifications to accommodate students with handicaps within the educational environment for which you are responsible
   - c. knowledge of specialists available to assist with special education needs

4. **RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT:**
   - a. skills needed to function effectively as a member of a multidisciplinary team
   - b. knowledge of skills required for effective consultation

5. **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:**
   - a. knowledge of behavior management techniques
b. skills to organize a barrier-free physical environment

c. knowledge of group strategies that encourage cooperative behavior

6. ASSESSING HANDICAPPED NEEDS:
   a. knowledge of appropriate procedures for assessing the educational needs of students with handicaps
   b. can identify academic requirements for students within the educational environment
   c. can identify behavioral requirements for students within the educational environment

7. MODIFYING TEACHING:
   a. skills in assessing individual educational needs
   b. skills in modifying classroom activities to meet the needs of students with handicaps
   c. skills for keeping records of individual progress toward objectives
   d. knowledge about diverse models for individualized instruction

8. EVALUATING CLASSROOM PROGRESS:
   a. skills in compiling evaluative data on each student with a handicap
   b. skills to report data on student progress to other professional personnel
   c. skills to modify evaluation materials so they are educationally appropriate for students with a handicap