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Understanding What It Means to Be in a Relationship

■ DEFINING THE TERMS

In order that we begin this book on the same page, literally and figuratively, I think it is important that we have a clear understanding of the philosophy, terms, and definitions of co-teaching and how they relate to inclusion and collaboration. I'm just making sure here that all of us (me as the author, you as the reader, your co-teachers, and your administrators) are all sharing the same language and understanding of the issues so that there are no miscommunications. For example, let me begin by saying that while I delight in comparing two co-teachers to a married couple, and their administrator to a marriage counselor, I will not go as far as to consider myself the mother-in-law or justice of the peace or anything like that. I am merely the author of your *Co-Teaching Marriage Self-Help* book.

Defining Inclusion

Throughout the years, various civil rights acts have led to providing students with diverse needs a more rigorous academic education in an inclusive setting. In 1975, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) was passed. It was rewritten as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 and was reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). Because of IDEIA and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, more and more

students with disabilities are being taught in general education classrooms (Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebauer, 2005; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006b). IDEA supports the notion of a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities and mandates that these students be educated with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, in what is known as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Katsiyannis, Yell, & Bradley, 2001). For most children, the general education classroom is what is considered their LRE.

The practice of providing supports and services to students with disabilities in a general education setting is referred to as inclusion. Inclusion is “the understanding that all students—those who are academically gifted, those who are average learners, and those who struggle to learn for any reason—should be fully welcomed members of their school communities and that all professionals in a school share responsibility for their learning” (Friend & Pope, 2005, p. 57). The evolving movement of including students with diverse needs into general education classes is designed to provide them and typically developing students with systematic instruction and the opportunity to interact with one another (Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005). However, some critics argue that “the increased reliance of general educators to assume responsibility to disabled or at-risk children demands an effective support system that takes into consideration shared input and resources, responsibility, and decision making between general and special educators—a support system which is not in place in many educational settings” (Miller, Wienke, & Savage, 2000, p. 14). Is this support system in place at your school? If not, what is lacking? The collaboration of general educators and special service providers is one of the predominant ways that schools are using to ensure this type of support system exists for students—and for teachers.

In the past century, there has been a substantial increase in the number of students included in the general education classroom (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). With the increased number of students with disabilities as well as increased educational reforms, schools are looking into instructional delivery services to meet the needs of diverse students in the general education classroom. Miller et al. (2000) caution that, while shared input and resources are part of the proposed benefits of inclusive settings and collaborative instruction, in order for this to occur, “general educators must increase their willingness to open traditionally private classrooms to special educators” (p. 35). For students, families, educators, and schools to benefit from inclusive practices, it is imperative that educators are (a) open to the notion of fully integrating students with disabilities into the general education classes, (b) willing to collaborate with their colleagues to do so, and (c) aware of the characteristics, components, and strategies necessary to make inclusion successful for all. This book tackles these issues and provides readers with the information needed to create a successful co-taught program.



Want More on This Topic?

Find out about the research-identified benefits to inclusive education on the following pages.

Why Include *Those* Kids?

Check out these research-based benefits to inclusive education!

- ***Inclusive schools provide opportunities.*** These include opportunities for students with disabilities to make friends with a more diverse group of students, to include those without disabilities; opportunities for students to learn tolerance for those who are different; opportunities for teachers to learn skills from one another; and opportunities for communities to build on and support a collaborative culture.
- ***Inclusive schools help avoid labels/stigma.*** As teachers work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students, there is a reduction of stigma attributed to *those* kids (e.g., the ones who are separated and taught in the small room down the hall).
- ***Inclusive schools increase an acceptance of diversity.*** As students and faculty work with one another and learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses, there is a stronger emphasis on the importance of diversity. Students see teachers modeling collaboration and respecting one another's differences and are able to learn those skills, ultimately bringing that acceptance—and celebration—of diversity with them when they enter society as contributing members.
- ***Inclusive schools help build relationships.*** As general educators work more closely with special service providers (e.g., academic coaches, special education teachers, Title I teachers, and speech-language pathologists), they forge relationships that can support them in the future. Similarly, students continue to build relationships with other students who are different than they are.
- ***Inclusive schools consider the future.*** Society is diverse and all types of individuals are necessary to make it function. Bringing various individuals together to learn from one another and to recognize the strengths of each individual, rather than working from a deficit model, helps positively impact the future of our society.
- ***Inclusive schools result in improved instruction.*** As teachers collaborate, they are able to provide each other with both support and strategies to ensure that students are provided with high quality instruction based in best practices pedagogy. Access to the general education content enables students with disabilities to have a chance at learning what their peers who are nondisabled are learning.
- ***Inclusive schools result in improved assessment results.*** Schools that have embraced inclusive practices over a period of years report having positive results on informal and formal assessments. Students with disabilities are able to participate in standardized assessments and their scores are increasing due to the access to general education content that inclusion affords them.
- ***Inclusive schools support self-advocacy.*** When students feel comfortable that diversity and differences are acceptable, they are more willing to self-advocate. They recognize that each person is an individual with differing needs and that it is important to be able to know and explain one's areas of strength and need.
- ***Inclusive schools uphold the law.*** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 states that children with disabilities need to be educated in the least restrictive environment, which for most students is typically determined to be the general education classroom. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 encourages the standardized assessment of all students, including those with disabilities, and requires that all children receive content instruction from a highly qualified content teacher. In order to meet both of these items, teachers need to include students in the general education class and ensure that their needs are being met.
- ***Inclusive schools increase collaboration.*** The inclusion of students with disabilities cannot be successful unless stakeholders are collaborating. Parents need to work with educators, general and special education teachers need to work together, teachers need to work with administrators, and everyone needs to include the child. In inclusive schools, all of these individuals have the opportunity to positively interact in order to do what is best for the child—a true testament to collaboration.

Defining Collaboration

Because numerous school reforms seek to ensure systematic, valuable instruction for all students in the general education setting, *collaboration* has been a popular buzzword in schools. Dr. Marilyn Friend (2000) shared that there are numerous myths about collaboration, and she includes the misconception that collaboration is occurring every time two or more individuals interact. The requirements for collaboration are more than engagement among individuals of group. Collaboration requires interaction, to be sure, but it is much more than that. Just as we would not label any two people we see interacting as *married*, so must we realize that professionals who are interacting are not necessarily collaborating. Collaboration is a very specific relationship. Collaboration refers to “a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (Friend & Cook, 2007, p. 4). Collaboration can occur in almost any context where people are interacting; equally important, however, is the understanding that it may *not* be occurring, whether or not the label is applied. . . . All too often, schools label their programs ‘collaborative’ without having the elements in place to guarantee that authentic partnerships exist” (Friedman Narr, Murawski, & Spencer, 2007, p. 9).

Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) defined collaboration by describing the importance of differing areas of expertise that collaborators would bring to the table. Their definition highlights the importance that diverse areas of expertise can play when problem solving. My friend and colleague, Claire Hughes, and I define collaboration more narrowly in an article we wrote on co-teaching for gifted education. We define collaboration as “a style for interaction, which includes dialogue, planning, shared and creative decision making, and follow-up between at least two coequal professionals with diverse expertise, in which the goal of the interaction is to provide appropriate services for students, including high achieving and gifted students” (Hughes & Murawski, 2001, p. 196). While our specificity may not work for collaboration in all instances, we believe it is highly appropriate when discussing collaboration in inclusive schools where differentiation and addressing students’ individual and diverse needs is the goal. And shouldn’t this be the goal of all schools?

Why is collaboration so popular in schools these days? Why aren’t teachers allowed to just continue doing what they have done for years—shut their doors and teach their own ways as they see fit? To begin with, society has become more and more collaborative and interactive. Fortune 500 companies identified the top skills required for their incoming employees; their top five skills were (1) teamwork, (2) problem solving, (3) interpersonal skills, (4) oral communication, and (5) listening. Where did Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic fall? Writing was #10, computation was #12, and reading was #13. Social networking is key in most jobs and certainly requires strong collaboration and communication skills. The educational research literature also cites numerous benefits as to why students and teachers need to learn to play nicely with each other. For example, any time there is a need to shift an organizational paradigm, such as what is required for inclusive education to take hold in a school, collaboration is a

necessary component for success (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2003; Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996). Teachers who cringe at being asked to meet the diverse needs in the classroom have found that collaborating with other educators increases their ability to meet those needs (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007; Purcell & Leppien, 1998). Hughes and Murawski (2001) and Pugach and Johnson (1995) reported that collaboration among students and faculty helped achieve more complex goals, improve social interactions, and even increase creativity. Therein lies the adage, “two heads are better than one.”

Another important benefit of teacher collaboration is that teachers can better assist one another with problem solving (Foley & Mundschenk, 1997; Snell & Janney, 2000). Given how often problems arise in the everyday classroom, this is certainly a valuable asset. In addition, teachers who collaborate with other educators found that they were more able to model and communicate the value of collaborative behaviors to their students (Villa et al., 1996; Weinstein, 2003). Instead of telling students how they should interact with others, we can now show them. Modeling behavior is certainly a key element to instruction in the elementary classroom.

Let me emphasize that collaboration is *not* about watering down the curriculum for students with disabilities; it is about working with colleagues to problem solve and meet goals. Are you a sports fan? Then collaboration is not about moving the goal posts; it is about raising the bar. This can include providing enrichment opportunities to students who need challenge, as well as additional depth or breadth to their curriculum and instruction (Hughes & Murawski, 2001; Purcell & Leppien, 1998). Finally, another benefit I have experienced is that in those schools where collaboration is more common and evident, administrators and teachers actually encourage the interaction of university and K–12 faculty for data collection and research (Murawski, 2003). What this means is that instead of having a moat between the ivory tower concepts that university professors may espouse (yours truly excepted here, of course) and what is actually occurring in PreK–12 schools, there is a clear connection between theory and practice (Murawski, 2002b).

How do we become more collaborative? For starters, training. Professional development is a critical element in providing a clear vision of the roles and responsibilities of participating in an inclusive and collaborative program (Friend, 2000). For collaboration to be an effective approach across the spectrum of an inclusive program, it is essential that professionals acquire the skills and knowledge of what constitutes effective collaboration (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Friend, 2000). In addition, the educational literature supports the importance of a mutual commitment and willingness among active participants to promote a positive collaborative atmosphere (Friend & Cook, 2007; Weiner & Murawski, 2005). As participants develop an understanding of collaboration, it is more likely they will share common visions and goals, thereby developing more cohesive inclusive programs for students with and without disabilities (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Friend, 2000; Weiner & Murawski, 2005).

Inclusion and collaboration are not going away. Due to IDEIA requiring collaboration as part of special education services, schools are shifting toward a collaborative inclusive model wherein instructional partnerships between general and special educators are essential in delivering services to students

with disabilities in the general education classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). Thus, successful implementation of services and support needs to be delivered through the qualified and positive collaboration of general and special education teachers, among others. Friend and Cook (2007) reference different structures that require collaboration (i.e., consultation, teaming, and co-teaching). Each of these structures can assist general and special education teachers in providing the educational services students need to succeed. An easy reference is provided here to help clarify the many special education-related terms and acronyms that can get confusing.

Clarifying Terminology

<p>Regular Education Initiative (REI). First major movement to put all children with disabilities into the general education classroom (Will, 1986)</p>	<p>Mainstreaming. The placement of students with disabilities into general education classes, usually part-time and without any additional services</p>
<p>Collaboration. A style of interaction in which two or more professionals work together toward a common goal (Friend & Cook, 2003)</p>	<p>Consultation. An interaction in which one party provides assistance and expertise to assist another party</p>
<p>Inclusion. A philosophy that states that students with disabilities have the right to receive their education in a general education classroom, with necessary supports and services provided in that setting</p>	<p>Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). A legal specification from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that students with disabilities are to be educated <i>to the greatest extent possible</i> with their general education peers</p>
<p>Teaming. When educators collaborate and communicate regarding the same group(s) of students without necessarily teaching in the same classroom</p>	<p>Job Sharing. When educators work part-time and take alternate days to instruct the same group of students</p>
<p>Team Teaching. A method of co-instruction by which both educators co-facilitate a lesson at the same time, one of the five co-teaching approaches identified by Cook & Friend (1995)</p>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <p>Co-Teaching. When two or more educators <i>co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess</i> a group of students with diverse needs in the same general education classroom (Murawski, 2003)</p> </div>	

EZ Reference

Figure 1.1 Clarifying Terminology

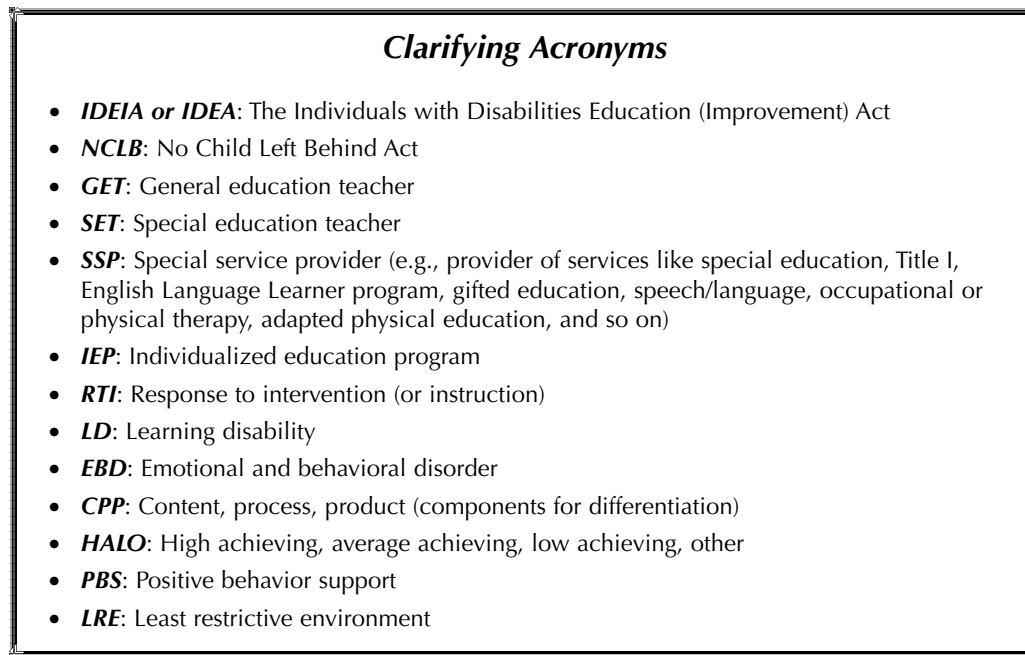


Figure 1.2 Clarifying Acronyms

For the purpose of this text, co-teaching is the collaborative model of focus. In fact, it is often cited as one of the most common service delivery approaches gaining in use in schools for students with disabilities (e.g., Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Thousand et al., 2006b; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). Before we venture further into this book, we need to clearly define co-teaching. Naturally, since we have a whole book devoted to co-teaching, this next part provides an overview; details of who, what, when, where, why and especially *how* are covered in subsequent chapters.

Defining Co-Teaching

As schools are shifting to provide more inclusive programs, due in great part to the IDEIA 2004 emphasis on providing more systematic academic opportunities to students with disabilities, general and special education teachers are being pressured (did I say pressured? I meant sweetly encouraged) to jointly and effectively deliver services to all students in the general education classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002; Wischnowski, Salmon, & Eaton, 2004). A popular service delivery model that is frequently being suggested in meeting academic needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom is—you guessed it—co-teaching. Co-teaching is also called collaborative teaching, team teaching or cooperative teaching but, regardless of which term is used, we are describing two or more professionals who deliver quality instruction to students with and without disabilities in a classroom (Dieker & Barnett, 1996; Friend & Cook, 2007). Furthermore, co-teaching is also referred to as the key for bringing people with diverse backgrounds and interests together to share knowledge and skills as they individualize learning for students

(Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006a). Collaborative teaching provides general and special educators a greater opportunity to ensure that students with disabilities obtain a more structured and appropriate education within their community. If you have chosen—or have been chosen—to embark upon this professional marriage, congratulations! You and your partner must now get ready to work together to *raise* some very special students. This quick litmus test (Figure 1.3) will help you determine if you are already co-teaching.

<i>Co-Teaching Litmus Test</i>		
Are you a professional educator?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Are you working in the same classroom at the same time as another professional educator on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Do you and your colleague co-plan (jointly determining what you will teach and how)?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Do you and your colleague co-instruct (teach the students together, sharing roles)?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Do you and your colleague co-assess (share in evaluation and determining grades)?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
<p>If you have any no's, you are <i>not yet successfully co-teaching</i>. Read on to determine what you need to be doing.)</p> <p>If you only have yes's, <i>congratulations!</i> You are co-teaching successfully. Read on to determine how you can continue to improve.</p>		

Figure 1.3 Co-Teaching Litmus Test

CHANGING THE MINDS ■ OF THE COMMITMENT-PHOBIC

It is important for those interested in supporting inclusive education to recognize that some educators will be, and often rightfully so, resistant to change. So many new theories, practices, initiatives, and programs have come and gone in education that many veterans are skeptical of change. They are the ones who often question the rationale for new policies and who tend to hold firm to practices that they find tried and true. Rather than avoiding, overlooking, or even talking negatively about these individuals and their resistance to change (Friend & Cook, 2007), inclusion supporters should recognize these veteran educators' reluctance and address it directly. For example, some teachers may appear *commitment-phobic* when in truth they are merely concerned that all students will not get their needs met in an inclusive environment. They, like the rest of us, truly want what is best for students; they may, however, disagree with how to accomplish that. We become possessive and territorial rather than open and collaborative. For inclusive practices to be embraced and for relationships and commitments to grow, all stakeholders need to be educated as to the rationale and research behind inclusive education and the various service delivery options that might be used in schools to make inclusion successful.

History and Rationale of Inclusion

According to Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, and Liebert (2006), the concept of inclusion is over 30 years old. We can look to the principle of normalization espoused by Wolfensberger in the 1970s for its impetus. Focusing on the education of individuals with disabilities, Kavale and Forness (2000) report that special education started as a program separate from general education. This is different from the concept of inclusion. Inclusive education seeks to meet individual needs as well as to provide universal education for all students. In fact,

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is inclusive in nature and is increasing in popularity. UDL calls for multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement (www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html). If learning can be universally designed, why then were students with disabilities historically served in segregated settings?

Want More on This Topic?

Learn more about UDL and its relation to co-teaching in Part IV: The Marriage.

The purported advantages of segregated programs include smaller class sizes, more individual instruction, and specially trained teachers. However, even back in 1968, Lloyd Dunn wrote an article that questioned the ethical and legal implications of excluding special education students from general education. Kavale and Forness (2000) suggest that this article was the impetus for including students with disabilities in general education. In addition, a look at current special education programs calls into question the assumption of smaller class sizes, individualized attention, and specially trained, highly qualified teachers. I personally had the experience one year of teaching 24 students with identified disabilities in a special education resource class, while my general education colleagues enjoyed a class-size reduction initiative that mandated certain general education classes have no more than 20 students. The district had not thought to include special education classes in that initiative. Ironically, the majority of the students in my class were there because their individualized education programs (IEPs) stated that a special education class was required in order to provide more intensive, individualized, small-group instruction in their areas of disability. So, ultimately, those students were pulled out of a 20:1 class with a highly qualified teacher to come to a class with a 24:1 ratio and a teacher trying to address multiple subjects, grade levels, and disability issues in the same class at the same time.

Renzaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow, and Stoxen (2003) concur that inclusion comes from the concept of normalization. Although their research primarily addresses individuals with severe disabilities, the normalization concept suggests that *all* individuals with disabilities should have lives similar to people without disabilities. It also suggests that *all* individuals with disabilities should be free to create better lives according to their personal situations. The concept of civil rights and the notion that “separate is not equal” are lines of reasoning that have been frequently argued as advocates work to promote inclusive education.

Alper, Schloss, Etscheidt, and MacFarlane (1995) clarified the principles of inclusion in their book *Inclusion: Are We Abandoning or Helping Students?* Look at Figure 1.4 on page 16 as you think about your own school site and situation.

How does your site demonstrate—or *not* demonstrate—these principles? Are some of the principles easier to agree with than others? Why? What concerns do you have related to these principles or to taking these principles from theory into practice? Take a few minutes to share these principles with others at your school and discuss their reactions to them. If you already know who your co-teacher is or will be, make sure to get his take on these principles and questions also. Communicating about big ideas is an excellent start to a collaborative relationship.



Having special and general educators communicate regularly can help faculty embrace the notion of inclusion.

Individuals with disabilities should be considered the same as individuals without disabilities and have the same rights. This means that all individuals with disabilities should have the right to participate in the same activities and routines as individuals without disabilities in their communities, including having jobs and friends without disabilities. Although this idea has been supported by many advocates of individuals with disabilities, the question of how best to meet the needs of students who need special education services continues to challenge parents, advocates, and educators.

Before 1975, there was very little reform in special education. It took vocal parents and parent organizations to prompt the government to act. When President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-142 into law (first called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and later reauthorized as the

Principles of Inclusive Practices
(1) Students are more alike than not alike.
(2) Learning can occur through participation with and modeling of competent peers.
(3) The supplementary instructional support needed to help students succeed can be provided in a general education classroom.
(4) Everyone benefits from having students with different learning styles and behavioral traits in the same classroom.

As a school, discuss the above and answer the following questions:

- Do you agree with all four principles? Why or why not? If there is a principle you do not agree with, why not? What needs to occur to change your opinion?

- What actions do faculty and staff take at your school to demonstrate these principles?

- Do students and families appear to recognize and support these principles? Why or why not?

- What additional actions can be taken to further promote these principles and to share these principles with students, their families, and other stakeholders?

Figure 1.4 Principles of Inclusive Practices
SOURCE: Adapted from Alper et al. (1995).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA), the way was paved for more students with disabilities to be served in general education. The law states that *all* children, regardless of disability, be provided with educational services (Lipskey, 2005). School districts were required to develop and implement IEPs for each child identified as having a disability. Kavale and Forness (2000) define inclusion as a “ movement seeking to create schools that meet the needs of all students by establishing learning communities for students with and without disabilities, educated together in age-appropriate general education classrooms in neighborhood schools” (p. 279). Burstein et al. (2004) add to this definition by including the phrase “with the supports and accommodations needed” (p. 104). McLeskey and Waldron (2002) emphasize that inclusion involves *all* students and teachers. It is not just a special education issue. If inclusion is going to be successful, the educational practices of all teachers must change. Inclusive schools go through a process. See Figure 1.5 for a typical progression of meeting the needs of students with disabilities over the years. Even after schools embrace the philosophy of inclusion, it takes time and baby steps to successfully implement inclusive principles (Murawski, 2005b). It does not happen overnight or all at once.

Obviously, this is not an easy task. As might have been expected, the inclusive movement marked the beginning of a series of laws and lawsuits designed to challenge the idea of increased integration of students with disabilities in general education. The next section of this review discusses some of the important legislation that continues to change the face of special education. Administrators and teacher leaders who are planning to lead their schools in moving toward more inclusive practices must be aware of these laws and their subsequent impact on today’s districts.

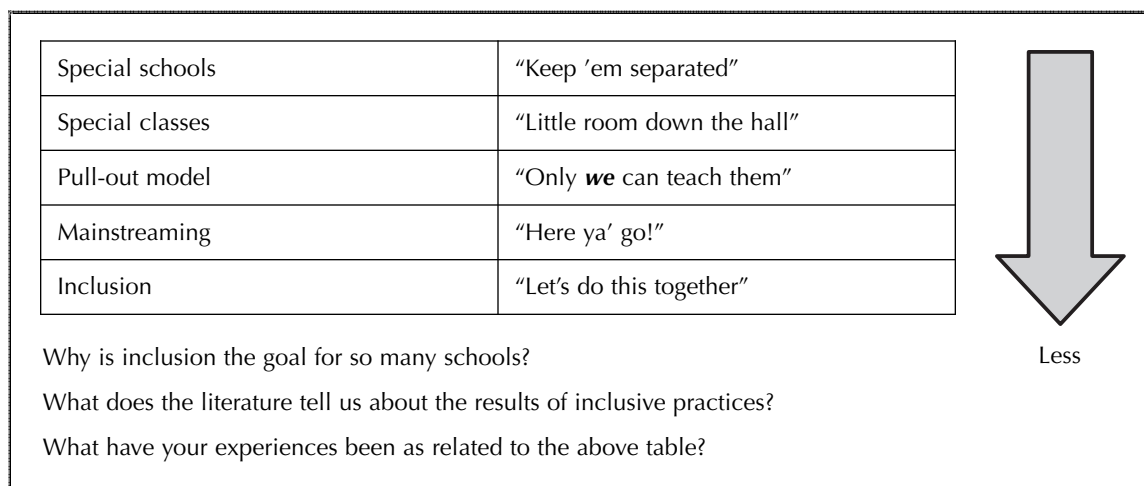


Figure 1.5 The Progression
 SOURCE: Murawski, W. W. (2008a).

Laws Related to Inclusion

Katsiyannis et al. (2001) credit the civil rights victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 for leading many parents and advocates of students with

disabilities to demand full inclusion in general education. *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate was not equal and caused many parents and advocates to question the educational placement of students with disabilities. Certainly, institutions, special schools, and even classrooms down the hall were all very separate areas for educating—or let's face it, in many cases, not educating but simply parking—individuals with disabilities. Labeling a child as having a disability guaranteed that the child would receive a separate education.

Much special education legislation was passed over the next 20 years, including the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the first effort by the federal government to provide funds for special education. However, the law that most significantly changed special education was Public Law 94-142 in 1975, the first act to exclusively address students with disabilities (Smith, 2005). Smith also reports that while there were many provisions to PL 94-142, the following addressed the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education:

- **FAPE.** Ensuring a *free appropriate public education* for all children with disabilities that focuses on providing special education and related services to meet their individual needs.
- **Child Find.** Schools have to find children with disabilities and start the referral process to determine eligibility.
- **IEP.** Every child in special education must have an *individual education program* identifying the child's needs, goals, and objectives.
- **LRE.** To the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities should be educated with their nondisabled peers in the *least restrictive environment*. This provision resulted in the increased inclusion of students with disabilities and created years of debate about the placement of individuals with disabilities.

Katsiyannis et al. (2001) also reported that due to the many changes in the law, special education is the most litigated area of education. There have been many important laws, but the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) and its subsequent amendments continue to push the agenda of inclusive education for all students. In 1990, EAHCA was amended and renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA). One of the most controversial issues in IDEA is the FAPE requirement that students with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education in the least

restrictive environment (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004). This means to the maximum degree possible, students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom and when general education settings are not appropriate, in the least segregated setting appropriate. It also addressed placement of students who were not appropriate for general

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Want More on This Topic?

The continuum of placement options is addressed further in Chapters 2 and 4.

education by providing a continuum of alternative placement options. The controversial provision of LRE continued in succeeding reauthorizations of IDEA in 1997 and 2004 (Smith, 2005). What this means for us in terms of co-teaching is that more and more students with disabilities continue to be in the general education classroom, and it is expected that their educational, behavioral, and social needs will be met in that environment.

According to Zigmond (2003), while the IDEA amendments continue to push for inclusion, the focus moved from providing access for students with disabilities to be with their nondisabled peers for a social purpose, to a new focus defined in terms of their access to the general education curriculum. With the additional requirement that students with disabilities participate in all statewide assessments and accountability procedures, educators face increased pressure to choose a service delivery model that includes all students in the educational process.

Another requirement emerged to add to the confusing paradigm shift—one that presumably offered higher expectations and better instruction for students, and one that also resulted in increased co-teaching. This new requirement in IDEIA 2004 directed all special education teachers to meet the “highly qualified” mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Smith, 2005). This required all special education teachers to meet NCLB requirements, have a state special education certification (not a temporary, emergency, or provisional certification), and at least a bachelor’s degree. It also meant that a special education teacher teaching core academic subjects in Title I schools, and listed as the teacher of record, must possess a teaching credential in that content area (Müller & Burdette, 2007). This created major problems in special education (Smith, 2005), especially at the secondary level. With the current shortage of special education teachers, the new *highly qualified* standards discouraged some otherwise qualified teachers from pursuing special education teaching credentials. Additional requirements in some states mandated that general education teachers take more special education courses than they previously had to during their credentialing process. At the elementary level, many teachers across the nation are becoming *dually certified* in both special education and multiple subjects (general education) by completing programs that have special education teacher licensing requirements aligned with those of general education teachers (Müller & Burdette, 2007).

One solution many schools have selected is to have a general education subject area teacher and a special education teacher teach in the same classroom at the same time by using the service delivery option we are focused on in this book—co-teaching. In fact, some states (e.g., Alabama) do not require special educators who are working collaboratively in general education classes to obtain content knowledge specialization; by having a general educator in the room who is highly qualified in the content, the special educator can continue to focus on providing specialized support (Müller & Burdette, 2007). Yet, though we will be concentrating on the what, why, and how of co-teaching for the majority of this text, it is equally important that educators (and families as well) realize that co-teaching is just one option on the continuum of service

options provided to students in the inclusive classroom. Understanding that continuum can also help educators and parents collaborate to determine what supports a child really needs in order to be successful in the general education classroom. This requires an explanation of the various options available on that continuum and how educators can collaborate to determine what is best for each individual child.