

Lecture 5

Book: Students with Learning Disabilities

Chapter 5- Educational Settings and Services

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Summary

Selection of Special Education Services and Settings:

- ❖ **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** According to IDEA 2004, the least restrictive environment (LRE) means that, to the extent appropriate, students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities. The IEP team collectively decides the student's LRE by determining the setting that best meets the student's social and educational needs or the selection of the student's "most enabling environment". The LRE principle stresses the need for using a continuum of services sensitive to diverse needs. This idea is illustrated in the "cascade system" developed by Deno (1970) which is as follows:
 1. General class assignment with or without supportive services
 2. General class assignment plus supplementary instructional services.
 3. Part time special class
 4. Full time special class
 5. Special school assignment within public school system
 6. Homebound instruction
 7. Placement in a facility operated by a health or welfare organization.

Education services provisions for students with learning disabilities: The three major categories of services are general class, special class and special school. the school based services are residential school and special day school; special class based services are full time special class and part time special class & part time general class; general class based services are general class placement with resource room assistance, general class placement with itinerant services, general class placement with special materials and consultation & general class placement with no or limited supportive school based services.

The general education inclusion setting: In the US, more than 85% of students with learning disabilities spend a majority of their time in general education classes. In this placement, students spend most of the day with peers of the same age. This is considered an inclusion placement. Many factors determine the level of success for the student with disabilities placed in the general education setting, including the classroom teacher. Factors that deserve consideration include

teacher's attitude towards as well as their knowledge of students with learning disabilities. Teachers should also be skilled at administering progress monitoring assessment, implementing appropriate modifications and accommodations, and providing intensive, individualized instruction.

Enhanced instructional techniques: In an inclusive setting, a general classroom teacher may provide all of a students' instruction, with little or no support from a special education teacher. The general educator provides instruction to students with learning disabilities using specified materials such as supplementary reading series, learning strategy materials, computer assisted instruction or content enhancement materials.

Collaborative consultation: It is another service delivery option for students placed in the general education setting. In this model, a special education teacher provides consultation to the general education teacher. Collaborative consultation may consist of demonstrating the use of materials or equipment, performing assessment, developing specific learning strategies, teaching lessons in the general education classroom, or providing a professional development program.

Co-teaching : It is a relatively new model of instruction that has been implemented in response to changing mandates about teacher qualification. Co-teaching may be generally defined as a situation in which two teachers provide instruction to a diverse group of students within one classroom. According to Henley, Ramsey, and Algozzine (2006), approaches to co-teaching usually fall under one of five models: one teach-one support, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching and team teaching. In the one teach-one support model, one teacher generally provides the instruction while the other teacher drifts around the room and provides support to individual students as needed. In the station teaching model, each teacher provides instruction to students at stations in the classroom. In parallel teaching, the teachers develop the lesson plan together but split the class and deliver instruction simultaneously to the two different groups. In alternative teaching, one teacher delivers content to the whole group, and the second teacher works with smaller groups of students who need additional support and provides supplemental instruction. Finally, in the team teaching model, the teachers share the instruction equally throughout the class period.

Services provided outside of the general education classroom: There is some concern that the general education setting may not meet the needs of all students with learning disabilities. Other placement options that may be appropriate for students with learning disabilities include:

- ❖ **Resource rooms:** Students with learning disabilities spend the majority of the day in a general education class and go to the resource room for a specified of time e.g. 45-60 mins each day. Common resource room models include categorical and non categorical settings. Categorical programs serve only students with learning disabilities. Non categorical programs serve exceptional students from several categorical areas i.e. students with mild to moderate

intellectual disabilities, emotional disabilities, and learning disabilities. Some disadvantages of resource rooms have been listed as:

1. The student may miss valuable lessons in the general education classroom while attending the resource room.
2. They student may miss enjoyable activities e.g. music, physical education and art in the general education classroom while attending the resource room.
3. The student may feel stigmatized for leaving the general education classroom to receive special help.
4. The resource room and general education classroom teachers may fail to coordinate instruction.

❖ Part and full time special classes: Special class placement should be considered only for the student with a severe learning disability. Some guidelines for considering special class placement are:

1. The special class teacher should be trained to teach students with learning disabilities and should be highly qualified in the content areas for which the student will be receiving instruction.
2. The students should be selected on the basis of learning or social emotional problems, not on the basis of socio-economic status or race.
3. The students should receive intensive and systematic instruction tailored to their unique needs.
4. A wide variety of materials and resources should be available to the teacher. Materials and resources selected should be validated for use with students with learning disabilities.
5. The class size should be considerably smaller than that of a general education class.
6. Each student's progress should be monitored continually. Instruction should be based on the ongoing data-collection process, and reintegration into the general education setting should be considered when it is feasible.
7. The class should have administrative support.

❖ Special schools: students with severe learning or emotional problems who have difficulty functioning in the regular school may attend a special day school either part time or full time. Some schools have no services available for students with severe problem, and in these areas, such students may be educated entirely at a special school. Many educators believe that these settings are too segregated and that all students deserve the opportunity to attend their neighborhood schools. Some primary considerations involved in a special school placement include:

1. Severity of the problems.
2. Costs to the family.
3. Transportation.
4. Degree of isolation.
5. Home conditions.
6. Parental requests.

Program factors and least restrictive environment: when the instructional and social needs of students with learning disabilities are met in inclusive settings, it is the most appropriate placement. The question of what constitutes an effective inclusion program is becoming increasingly important. Ysseldyke and Christenson (1993) developed the Instructional Environmental System-II to help educators evaluate learning environments. This scale was developed in part on empirically based teaching practices that facilitate positive student outcomes for learners with mild disabilities. According to several researchers, the following instructional features are important in promoting successful inclusion:

1. An instructional match is maintained for each student.
2. Individualized pacing for achieving instructional goals is maintained.
3. Student progress is monitored, and continuous feedback is provided.
4. Students are involved in the planning and monitoring of their learning.
5. A broad range of techniques and materials is used.
6. Students help each other to learn.
7. Teachers engage in instructional learning.

Teacher teaching teachers: According to the reauthorization of IDEA 2004, collaboration between special education and general education teachers is now required. In addition to the need for collaboration among general and special education settings, there are other compelling reasons for working together. Cook and Friend (1991) note that the information explosion means that teachers need to share expertise. Teachers, parents and community members must be able to make responsible decisions concerning school quality. Various special education/ general education problem solving and/or teaching teams have emerged to meet the challenge of educating students with identified or suspected disabilities in the general classroom. This approach focuses on meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities within the general classroom before considering formal education services and more segregated placements.

Strategies for increasing consultation time: They are as follows:

1. Create times when large numbers of students can be brought together for grade-level or school wide activities under the supervision of a few teachers.
2. Have the principal teach one period a day on a regular basis.
3. Cluster students working on similar assignments into larger groups under the supervision of a few teachers.

4. Hire a permanent substitute who “floats” from classroom to classroom as needed.
5. Designate a specific time each week for staff collaboration.
6. Designate one day each month or one day per grading period as “Collaboration Day”.
7. Extend the school day for about 20 minutes on two days per week to provide collaboration periods for teachers.

➤ Collaborative problem solving: Collaborative consultation is an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. The outcome is enhanced, altered and different from the original solutions that any team member would produce independently. The major outcome of collaborative consultation is to provide comprehensive and effective programs for students with special needs within the most appropriate context, thereby enabling them to achieve maximum constructive interaction with their non handicapped peers. The problem solving stages in collaborative consultation is as follows:

- i) Stage 1: Goal/entry. Roles, objectives, responsibilities and expectations of the consultant and consulter are negotiated.
- ii) Stage 2: problem identification. The problem is defined clearly and discussed until all members have a mutual understanding of the problem.
- iii) Stage 3: Intervention recommendations. Interventions are generated and prioritized in the expected order of implementation. Written, measurable objectives are developed to (a) detail specific interventions for each aspect of the problem (b) establish criteria to determine whether the problem has been solved and (c) spell out the roles of the student and respective team members and identify appropriate resources needed for delivering interventions.
- iv) Stage 4: Implementation recommendations. Implementation is provided according to established objectives and activities. Time lines and respective personnel responsible for selected interventions are specified. In the collaborative model, the consultant and consulter usually have a responsibility. Typically, the consultant assumes a modeling role that phases out as the consulter gains expertise and confidence with the intervention.
- v) Stage 5: Evaluation. The success of the intervention strategies is assessed. This assessment includes measures of student, consultant, consulter and system change.
- vi) Stage 6: Redesign. The intervention is continued, modified or discontinued on the basis of the evaluation of the intervention strategies.

➤ Assistance teams: Various assistance teams models have been developed to facilitate problem solving among teachers for students who are having academic or behavioral difficulties. These models may be called ‘teacher assistance teams’, ‘intervention assistance teams’, or ‘problem solving teams.’ Early studies of teacher assistance teams

(TAT) model have demonstrated its effectiveness in helping teachers reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and in resolving many students' problems. Each team consists of three elected teachers, the teacher seeking help and parents or others as needed. The referring teacher provides information concerning the student's strengths, weaknesses and interventions that have been tried. Typically, the team conducts a problem solving meeting by (a) delineating specific objectives with the teacher (b) brainstorming intervention alternatives, (c) selecting or refining interventions and (d) planning follow-up activities. A follow up meeting is planned in two to six weeks to determine whether the suggestions are working.

- **Coaching:** Peer coaching involves the formation of a small group of teachers and peer observation. Teachers observe each others' classrooms, get feedback about their teaching, experiment with improved techniques, and receive support. For example, coaching teams of three people engage in a three-phase process involving discussion/planning, observation and feedback. In the discussion/ planning phase, the teachers focus on the technique or strategy they want to learn or improve and outline the specific essential behaviors or actions for implementing that technique. In the observation phase, teacher 1 observes teacher 2, who observes teacher 3, who observes teacher 1. A format to guide data collection (e.g. checklist, log or tape recorder) helps observation. In the feedback phase, the observer and the teacher meet to discuss the observations. To help maintain the professional nature of coaching, the teachers must never talk to a third person about observations or let a team member draw others into personal problems. Periodically, the coaching team meets with other teams in a support group of 6 to 12 to plan and offer support for each other. Showers (1985) reports that coaching builds a community of teachers who continuously engage in the study of improved teaching.
- **Peer collaboration:** Peer collaboration involves pairs of teachers who engage in a highly structured dialogue about a problem involving a single student, a group of students, or a whole class. The structured dialogue includes opportunities for self-questioning, summarizing and predicting with regard to the specific problem of concerning the teacher. Each teacher in the dyad has a specific role. The initiator is the teacher who shares the problem and ultimately solves the problem. The facilitator guides the partner through each step in the dialogue to arrive at a solution. According to Pugach and Johnson (1990), classroom teachers exhibited the following behaviors as a result of training in the peer collaboration process:
 - (1) The focus of problem identification shifted away from the students to factors directly under the teacher's control.
 - (2) The teachers generated potential interventions for all problems targeted in a peer collaboration session.

- (3) The teachers effectively resolved over 85% of the problems targeted through peer collaboration.
 - (4) The teachers felt significantly more confident in their ability to manage classroom problems.
 - (5) Positive attitudes increased towards their class as a whole.
- Cooperative teaching: according to Bauwens and Hourcade (1991) cooperative teaching is “an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a co-active and coordinated fashion to jointly teach heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings (i.e. general education classrooms). In cooperative teaching both general and special education teachers are simultaneously present in the general classroom, maintaining joint responsibilities for specified education instruction that is to occur within the setting.” According to them there are three different configurations of cooperative teaching are:
- i) Team teaching: In this arrangement two teachers share instructional responsibility for a common body of content-area knowledge. The general and special education teachers jointly plan and instruct the same academic content to all students. Negotiation is a critical feature of this process. The teachers negotiate how the content will be presented, the time frames for instruction, and specific responsibilities for each part of the unit or lesson.
 - ii) Complementary instruction: The general educator has primary responsibility for teaching specific content areas, while the special educator teaches specific strategies or skills to students in need of additional instruction.
 - iii) Supportive learning: The general and special educators determine collaboratively the major content and instructional goals for any lesson. The teachers jointly identify activities to support and extend the lesson. Within the supportive learning activities arrangement, the general educator is primarily responsible for teaching the content however the special educator reinforces and enriches the content by implementing supportive learning activities.
- Communication skills for collaboration: Teachers need to use effective communication skills for successful implementation of collaboration. Idol and West (1991) provide the following principles of successful collaborative consultation:
1. Create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect so that team members feel safe in sharing information.
 2. Provide non-evaluative feedback when others are speaking.
 3. Use jargon-free language when sharing ideas.
 4. Be aware that nonverbal body language can communicate positive or negative messages.

5. Give and receive feedback willingly and effectively, without confrontation.

The learning disabilities teacher: To deliver direct services, the learning disabilities teacher must demonstrate the most effective empirically based assessment and teaching practices. To deliver indirect services, he or she needs effective consultation skills to work with teachers of general education students, school based assistance teams and parents.

- Consultation: Learning disabilities teachers as well as general education teachers need training to become efficient in the collaborative consultation process. West and Cannon (1988) worked with a 100-member interdisciplinary expert panel to generate consultation competencies needed by learning disabilities and general education teachers to meet the educational needs of students with learning disabilities and other disabling conditions in general classrooms. The panel identified 47 essential competencies in 9 categories. The categories receiving the highest ratings were (a) interactive communication (b) personal characteristics (c) equity issues, values and beliefs (d) collaborative problem solving and (e) evaluation of consultation effectiveness.

Students teaching students: Peer tutoring and cooperative learning are two viable approaches for promoting successful inclusion. These approaches provide the teacher with instructional arrangements that enable students to work independently and free the teacher to instruct other groups or individuals directly. The merits of tutorial instruction include pacing that is tuned to an individuals' learning rate, intensive practice for those who need it, and personal benefits to both the tutors and those being tutored. Cooperative learning also is successful with heterogeneous groups of learners and has received support from general and special educators.

Limited teacher-engagement instruction: To meet the instructional needs of the diverse group of students who comprise a general education class, the teacher needs to develop and use instructional approaches that enhance quality learning for those times when a student must and should work independently. Peer teaching and cooperative learning provide limited teacher-engagement instructional activities. These activities are suited especially for students to practice skills or review content presented earlier by the teacher. Mastery of skills and content is essential for the school's success of students with learning disabilities. Using self correcting materials, instructional games and computer assisted instruction and teaching students to be independent learners are viable approaches to help students work independently in their least restrictive environment.