

ASCD Community

Schools' Responsibility to Teach All Students: The 1970s and ASCD

"All children can learn." Today, educators and the general public universally accept this philosophy.

Thirty years ago, however, public schools were not held responsible for serving children with physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities, and millions of children were excluded or underserved. Nor were educators really expected to close the achievement gap between low-income children and their wealthier peers; after all, major research studies (Coleman et al., 1966; Jensen, 1969) had shown that schools could do little to overcome the disadvantages of family background.

In the 1970s, two important developments transformed U.S. public schools and advanced the cause of educational equity:

■ In 1975, Congress passed P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, for the first time requiring all states and local school districts to provide a "free and appropriate public education" to all children, regardless of the nature or severity of their disabilities.

■ Throughout the decade, a growing body of literature known as the Effective Schools research established that some schools were succeeding in educating low-income students—and that these schools shared a number of replicable characteristics.

Educational Leadership reported and celebrated these two movements to make high-quality education available to every student.

In the February 1979 issue, then-U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest L. Boyer contributed an article titled "Public Law 94-142: A Promising Start?"

Although the law's provisions had only been in effect since the beginning of the school year, Boyer reported that P.L. 94-142 was "creating fewer problems than school administrators and teachers expected." He added,

Now, with early fears eased, our schools can move rapidly—at last!—to give handicapped children the same opportunity to reach their potential that they give other children. That, in my judgment, is what our quest for equity and quality is all about. (p. 298)

The October 1979 issue of *Educational Leadership* included an article by Ron Edmonds, one of the founders of the Effective Schools movement. In "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Edmonds challenged the prevailing wisdom of the time and declared,

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. (p. 23)

Schools that do so, he wrote, share the following: strong instructional leadership by the principal; an emphasis on teaching basic math and reading skills;

high expectations for students; an orderly, safe climate; and regular measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.

Since the 1970s, educators have built on the legacy of such pioneers as Boyer and Edmonds, and ASCD members have been at the forefront of the effort to ensure excellence in education for all students. Happy anniversary, ASCD! ■

References

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A Resource for Responding to No Child Left Behind

ASCD joined other leading education organizations to publish the *Practical Guide to Talking with Your Community About No Child Left Behind and Schools in Need of Improvement*. The free, Web-based guide was developed by the Learning First Alliance (LFA), a partnership of ASCD and 11 other education organizations representing parents, teachers, principals, administrators, local and state boards of education, and schools of education.

The guide explains the No Child Left Behind legislation, its requirements, and its implications for local schools and districts. The materials, which give special attention to those schools that will be labeled "in need of improvement," are intended to assist local efforts to rally community support for school improvement—not to advocate for or against specific provisions in NCLB. You can download the materials from www.learningfirst.org/publications/nclbguide/index.html.



Web Wonders

Teaching All Students

Student diversity is one of the great strengths of our public schools. Students with different learning strengths and weaknesses, students from various cultures, students with physical challenges—all bring special gifts that enrich our school communities. But providing the education that enables each of these students to achieve his or her highest potential presents a daunting challenge. The following Web sites give educators access to comprehensive information about educating diverse learners.

Comprehensive Information Sources

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (<http://ericec.org>) offers links to more than 140 ERIC Digests on a wide variety of topics related to specific disability categories as well as instructional strategies. Sample titles include *Reducing the Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students in Special Education*; *The Identification of Students Who Are Gifted*; *Dual Exceptionalities*; and *The Least Restrictive Environment Mandate: How Has It Been Defined by the Courts?*

On the Web site of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP), you can access the full text of the last six editions of the *Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, which contain data on trends in special education services and student demographics. The site also contains many concise *Topic Briefs* with such titles as *Discipline for Children with Disabilities*, *A Guide to the Individualized Education Program*, and *Technology for Students with Disabilities*.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is "the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and the gifted." On its Web site at www.cec.sped.org, you will find updates on the

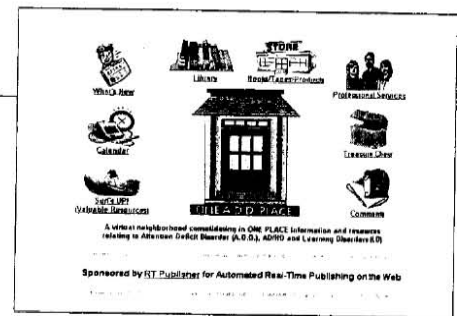
reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; sample issues of the council's two journals, *Exceptional Children* and *Teaching Exceptional Children*; and a catalog of other CEC publications.

Information About Inclusive Schools and Classrooms

The Inclusion Web site (www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/intro.htm#hbook), sponsored by the JP Das Developmental Difficulties Centre at the University of Alberta, offers information to help elementary, middle, and high school teachers create inclusive classrooms. It discusses such subjects as learning strategies, evaluation, teaching social skills, and preparing yourself and your classroom to include children with special needs. The Field Notes section includes more than 100 interviews with teachers who have had success with inclusive classrooms.

The Network for Inclusive Education (NIE) at www.enablinginclusion.org promotes inclusive education with an emphasis on the South Asian perspective. Here you will find a discussion of government inclusion efforts all over the world; a description of an inclusive school in Haryana, India; and a discussion of verbal and nonverbal communication that supports inclusion.

The Special Needs/Inclusion section of the New Horizons for Learning Web site (www.newhorizons.org) offers a database of inclusion teaching and learning resources and strategies, funded by Washington State's department of education. The purpose of the



One A.D.D. Place offers a collection of resources related to attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities.

database is to disseminate information related to inclusion resources, best practices, strategies, and research.

Specific Special Needs

The following national organizations and clearinghouses can help parents and educators become informed about specific special needs and their implications for education.

- Autism Society of America, www.autism-society.org; Resources in Autism Education, www.autismmed.com

- Asperger Syndrome Coalition of the U.S., www.asperger.org/index_asc.html; Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support, www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger

- Attention Deficit Disorder Association, www.add.org; *ADDitude Magazine*, www.additudemag.com; One A.D.D. Place, www.oneaddplace.com

- National Center for Learning Disabilities, www.nclld.org
- National Mental Health Association, www.nmha.org

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, www.asha.org

- American Association on Mental Retardation, www.aamr.org

- National Down Syndrome Society, www.ndss.org; *Down Syndrome Quarterly*, www.denison.edu/collaborations/dsq

- Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER Online), www.aerbvi.org ■

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