



LEGISLATIVE AND EDUCATION AWARENESS SERVICE FOR DIFFERENTLY ABLED

INTRODUCTION

There has been a steady history of government and social policy supporting the development of individuals who are differently abled so that they may have greater opportunities to participate in independent life in the community. This amendment to 'The Education for All Handicapped Children Act' emphasizes on the provisions of service to differently abled infants and toddlers (from birth - 2 years) as well as to other pre-school children. Motor development is critical to the functioning of pre-school children whether differently abled or not. An effective early physical education programme would minimize the likelihood of institutionalization of some of the more severely differently abled individuals and would maximize their potential for independent living in society.

CONCEPTS FROM LEGISLATION

Three primary concepts that have emerged from legislation have implication for conducting physical education for the differently abled:

- (1) School personnel must spell out achievable object in details and be held accountable for subsequent evaluation,
- (2) Parents must be fully informed of the nature of the programmes in which their children participate and
- (3) The education should take place in the most integrated setting, with normal children in regular class; each of these components of this educational delivery system requires the focus to be on the individual needs and learning of children with specific disabilities.

INTRAMURALS AND INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS

Differently abled children need the same opportunities for participation in intramurals and interscholastic sports activities like the normal children. Furthermore these opportunities, ideally are provided in the most integrated setting however provisions should be made to separate the differently abled from normal children during participation when it is necessary to ensure the health and safety of the students, or to take into account their interest. The central theme of the provision of equal opportunity in intramural and interscholastic participation for the differently abled is that of reasonable accommodation for these learners.

Legal Background: Differently abled children in the public school did not come about by chance. Rather many laws and court cases important to the education of differently abled children who had special needs made their education a fluid and dynamic process. The concept of educating differently abled children in the regular public schools had its roots in the Brown v, Board of Education of Topeka decision that established the right of all children to equal education opportunity. The court wrote:

"Education is required in the performance of our most basic responsibilities.... it is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principle in preparing him for later....training and in

helping him adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms...”

CONTINUUM OF LESSER RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

There are continua of lesser restrictive environments in educational settings and in the community. The lesser restrictive environment in the community where the individual will live life as an adult is very important, but frequently not very well defined. In the school setting the lesser restrictive environments are fairly well defined with respect to matching the severity of a problem of an individual with the setting in which the differently abled individual will be placed. The suggested cascade system of lesser restrictive school environments would be as follows:

Level 1: specialized facility (Non-public school)

The differently abled student needs more intense physical education than can be provided in a public school (day or residential programme).

Level 2: The special school setting.

The differently abled individual receives an individual physical education programme under the direction of an adopted physical education teacher in a specially designed facility within the public school system

Level 3: Regular physical education class and an adapted physical education (differently abled only) class.

Differently abled students receive the special physical education programme under the direction of the regular physical education teacher. In addition; the student spends time in a specially staffed and equipped adapted physical education setting.

Level 4: The regular physical education setting plus supplementary instruction and services

The differently abled pupil receives the individual physical education programme under the direction of the regular physical education teacher. In addition, instruction or services from an adapted physical education specialist is provided.

Level 5: the regular physical education setting

The differently abled student receives an individual physical education programme under the direction of the regular physical education teacher in the regular class.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Despite legal support for the principle of least restrictive environment, school placement of children with specific disabilities will be argued in informal discussions and formal hearings. The following points are critical to the concepts of least restrictive environment:

- ❖ The placement of differently abled children must be flexible and re-evaluated. Appropriate action should be taken on the re-evaluation

- ❖ The desirable placement goal is movement of the child to less restrictive environment where it is possible to participate in normal community and school activities with normal children.
- ❖ Eventual placement of the differently abled in less restrictive or normalizing environments requires individual programmes so that they can learn skills which allow for participation with normal children in normal settings.

COMMUNITY –BASED PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The major goal is to provide an education so that differently abled individuals could become independent adults in the community. Prerequisite to independent living is the acquisition of the physical and motor skills that will enable a differently abled individual to participate in domestic, recreational, and vocational life in the community. The physical and motor skills attained in instructional settings in the schools should be generalized into physical activity in the community. For the most part, normal individuals can make adaptation to community recreational life. However, many differently abled individuals, particularly those with severe signs of differently abled, may find it difficult to generalize what was taught in the public schools to community sport and physical activity. To overcome this problem one of the recent initiatives that has been put forth in education for differently abled persons is community based assessment and programming, which is a system that provides specific curriculum content for an individual. The school curriculum focuses on behaviours and skills that an adult will be able to use in the community environment. This system requires that there should be a relationship between the differently abled child's curriculum and that of the normal child in the local school district and that the relationship between the school's curriculum and the physical, sport and recreational skills learned will permit independent participation in the recreation of that community. This, while programming for differently abled persons, matches must be made on two levels. Community-based assessments and programming which assures the linkage between community, school curricula and the needs of the child. The key to the curriculum process is generalization.

NORMALIZATION

Normalization “means making available to the differently abled patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society “for this to occur society's view of the differently abled must be consistent with the following conditions:

- ❖ They must be perceived by society as human beings, not as subhuman .
- ❖ They must be perceived by society as possessing a legal and constitutional identity (due process of law for involuntary institutionalization as well as equal opportunity in education, housing, employment).
- ❖ They must be viewed as persons who can adapt to their environment and acquire skills for as long as they live.
- ❖ They must be provided opportunity by society to take full advantage of their culture.

- ❖ Services must be provided by trained personnel with technical competence in education and rehabilitation.
- ❖ The human services that care for the differently abled and provide opportunity for skill development must be valued and well understood by society.
- ❖ The differently abled must be provided opportunities to play valued roles and lead valued lives in our culture.

CO-ORDINATION OF DELIVERY OF SERVICES

There has been considerable emphasis on the belief that programmes for the differently abled should be of an interdisciplinary nature. However, according to Stone problems have existed in the delivery of services within the system. Professionals within the system have taken on the roles functions and goals of each other. This has happened because of inadequate planning or coordination and without consideration of the effectiveness of the various professionals in their new roles. As a result we have homogenized professionals who no longer have defined expertise and programmes that are less than desirable although Stone was not addressing physical education specifically, his view may well relate to the coordination of physical education and the related services (therapies). Role confusion can lead to duplication of services and some programmes and voids in others which ultimately result in a lack of comprehensive programming for differently abled children.

Public policymakers have assigned educational functions to those who are to provide direct services and those who provide indirect services. Direct services are those such as physical education that teach curricula sanctioned by school board and related services help differently abled children gain benefits from the intended outcomes of the direct services (e.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, occupational therapy and recreational therapy)

THE CONCEPT OF RELATED SERVICES

Before a related service such as physical therapy occupational therapy or recreational therapy can be implemented in the curriculum, it should be determined whether the limitation of that particular child is such that direct service (physical education) cannot effectively deal with the Childs educational problem. A related service should be provided when a child cannot make the expected progress in skill development in physical education. For instance, if it is decided that a differently abled child does not have the prerequisite strength of a specific muscle group to acquire a sport skill and that the physical educator cannot rectify the problem, a physical therapist may be called on to provide a related service. The physical therapist designs a programme for the specific muscle group to established prerequisite strength, and then the child can acquire the skills to be taught by the physical educator.

CONCLUSION

Physical education for differently abled individual has been a mandate for over a decade. As a result of the mandated physical education programmes, there are undoubtedly several model programmes in operation. It is painfully clear that physical education for differently abled student remains a woefully neglected and underdeveloped area of public school programming. One reason differently abled students are not receiving adequate institution in physical education s because they are inappropriately placed. By law different abled children should be placed in the most appropriate least restrictive setting that meets their needs. However, the incidence of differently abled individuals receiving physical education in regular class may be considerably more than in the academic subject.

