



Maximizing the Potential of the Special Needs Child



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How to Maximize the Potential of a Child with a Disability

1. Provide Educational Resources

- A. Timely access to special education resources, such as: people, materials, literature, technology, bulletins and information
- B. Pre-service, in-services, seminars, workshops

2. Establish an Advisory Council

- A. Utilizing the collective knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise of family members and professionals, including an education team of parents, teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators whose main goal is to build quality special education programs and services
- B. Creative use of human and fiscal resources
- C. Promotion of positive attitudes about disabilities
- D. Focus on strategies that support collaborative planning, problem solving, and site-based control

3. Educate School Personnel

- A. Pre-service training for all staff that work with children with disabilities
- B. On going training based on individual-needs of special education children
- C. Monies allotted to each teacher that are directly designated to seminars and conferences about behavior modification and teaching methodologies, especially those related to special education
- D. Teach understanding, ideas, strategies, models and interventions to utilize evidence-based framework for special education treatment and program planning
- E. Encourage children without disabilities to get to know children with disabilities, including social-skills programs involving typical peers in the regular classrooms setting
- F. Curriculum and technological adaptations and modifications

4. Train Paraprofessionals

- A. A detailed job description for paraprofessionals (aides) working with children with disabilities available at the District office, campuses and District website
- B. Development and implementation of rigorous standards for pre-service training of paraprofessionals and ongoing education of paraprofessionals where special education teaching methodologies and behavior modification techniques are included.
- C. A reserve of qualified, pre-trained paraeducator substitutes

Educate the Educators

“Through education and increased public awareness, we can foster understanding, acceptance and appreciation with autism.” - Dr. Richard Burton, the Health and Human Services Director

SELPA’s (Special Education Local Plan Area) basic goals include: “high quality special education programs.” SELPA supports “quality instruction for students, parents, fellow educators.” SELPA believes instruction should address all ability levels and learning styles.

The President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, Revitalizing Special Education for Children and their families stated: “Children with disabilities require HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS.” (emphasis was not added)

The National Education Association recommends for support personnel working with a child with a disability “on the job training, in-service training, teacher/paraeducator training, and conference activities, as well as career development.”

The National Association of School Psychologists notes: “All educators and administrators involved in implementing inclusive programs must participate in planning and training activities. When developing inclusive programs, adults with disabilities serving as experts and/or advocates, in addition to the students themselves, need to be included as much as possible.” In addition, “...the active involvement of general educators and administrators in staff development is critical for successful inclusion.”

In a study funded by the Department of Education, according to the NRC (National Research Council) a teacher must be able to identify an autistic child’s needs and use appropriate methods to address those needs. The NRC found the teachers cannot acquire these skills through classes alone, but need to have experience with models or working classroom and effective teachers. (NRC p.187) aboutautismlaw.com

In addition, teachers must be “familiar with theory and research concerning the best practices for children with autism, including methods of applied behavior analysis, naturalistic learning, assistive technology, socialization, communication, inclusion, adaptation of the environment, language interventions, assessments, and effective use of data collection system.” (NRC p.225) aboutautism.law.com

“Inclusive Programs are those in which students, regardless of the severity of their disability, receive appropriate specialized instruction and related services within an age appropriate general education classroom in the school that they would attend if they did not have a disability.” (NASP 2005)

Documented by Marcie Ciampi @ www.myseams.org

It's the Law

Special Education began as a movement to protect the civil rights of children with disabilities. The key issues of Special Education includes that **children with disabilities will have access to educational opportunities and will have education based on individual need**. The 1975 legislation mandated into public law The Education for All Handicapped Children which states a “**free appropriate public education**” in the “**least restrictive environment**.” The Education for All Handicapped Children is now the Individual Disabilities Education Act, or **IDEA**. President George Bush passed and signed The IDEA into law in 1990.

Today, over 30 years after the Special Education movement, **school districts are required to follow a complex set of regulations and case law in identifying and serving disabled students.**

Schools are expected to have an **adequate supply of qualified personnel** and anticipate personnel vacancies and shortages (paragraph 300.381 of the IDEA).

Districts are expected to have improvement strategies for personnel, a plan for the identified needs for **in-service and pre-service** preparation to ensure all persons working with children with disabilities have knowledge necessary to meet the needs of children with disabilities (paragraph 300.382 IDEA).

The IDEA Section 1410 found that “over 20 years of educational experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by (e) supporting **high-quality, intensive, professional development for personnel.**”

The federal law, 20 U.S.C Section 1413 (a) (3) states the school shall ensure that all personnel to carry out (The IDEA) are **adequately prepared**.

Sections of The California Education Code 56240-56245 specifically addresses staff development including: (www.leginfo.ca.gov/)

1. Include **volunteers** and **advisory committee** members in staff development.
2. Staff development should be **ongoing** “pursuant to” pupil and personnel needs.
3. Include **classroom teachers as the majority of design** and implementation of staff development.
4. **Parents of individuals with exceptional needs** are involved in design and implementation.
5. **Observations and visits to other classrooms or schools.**

Specifically section 56243 of the California Education Code reads that, “It is the intent of the Legislature”...that each district...**provide regular classroom teachers serving individuals with exceptional needs appropriate training each year relating to the needs of those individuals.**”

The Benefits

In 1997 President Bill Clinton stated: The IDEA has given individuals with disabilities a chance to “get rid of the baggage of ignorance and damaging stereotypes, and to begin to understand that what we have in common is far more important than what divides us.”

In closing President Bill Clinton stated that since the passage of the IDEA, “90 percent fewer developmentally disabled children are living in institutions, hundreds of thousands of children with disabilities attend public schools and regular classrooms; three times as many young people are enrolled in colleges and universities; twice as many young Americans with disabilities are in the workplace. We have to continue to push these trends, to do everything we can to encourage our children with disabilities not only dream of doing great things but to live out their dreams.

(Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS), 2001. An overview of the bill to provide a broad understanding of some of the changes in IDEA '97 is available at www.ed.gov/offices/OSER/IDEA/overview)

California Department of Education Reported “Prior to (The IDEA) implementation of approximately 1 million children with disabilities were shut out of school and hundreds of thousand more were denied appropriate services.”

“Over 1 million children, many of whom would have been placed in separate schools and institutions 25 years ago, are being educated in neighborhood schools, saving an average of \$10,000 per child per year.” (OSER)

The cost of lifelong care can be reduced 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention.
(www.USINFO.STATE.GOV.)

As of the 15th anniversary of ADA (American Disability Act) 8 out of 10 people with disabilities graduate high school, compared to 6 out of 10 in 1990.



Resources on Special Education

There are thousands of special education resources available. I have listed a few organizations that I studied or contacted for “Maximizing the Potential of the Special Needs Child” in 2005.

California Research Institute on Integration of Students with Severe Disabilities, San Francisco State University, 14 Tapia Drive, San Francisco CA 94132 (415) 338-7847

Placer County Office of Education <http://www.placercoe.k12.ca.us/>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, D.C. 20013-1492 1-800-695-0285

Legalmail@pai-cd.or Protection and Advocacy Inc. (PAI) a private nonprofit organization that provides a variety of advocacy services for Californians who have developmental or mental disabilities. 1-800-776-5746 www.pai-ca.org/

www.wrightslaw.com (A great starting point for anyone; filled with resources)

The Lincoln school district is Western Placer County Unified School District; we are served by the Placer County SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area). There community advisory committee is SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Committee) SEPAC meets the second Wednesday of each month at 9:30 and all are welcomed to attend. 360 Nevada Street Auburn, CA 95603 Director: Maureen Burness 1-530-889-5902

Developmental Disabilities Area Board III (There are 13 Area Boards) Advocate for persons with developmental disabilities in counties - appointed by either the County Board of Supervisors or the Governor – One duty includes: help start citizen advocacy groups to aid individuals with developmental disabilities to access, use needed services, and to become active in the community. (916) 324-7426 www.areaboard3.org

www.feat.org (autism organization)

www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/mindinstitute (diagnosis and research)

www.nea.org/esphome/nearsources/ (National Education Association)

www.calstat.org/ (supports and develops partnerships with school and families)

www.supportforfamilies.org (legislature links)

www.autismresearchinstitute.com

Warmline Family Resource Center: 420 Folsom Road #D, Roseville, CA 916-782-7147

www.myseams.org A special education group founded in Lincoln, CA

Provided by Marcie Ciampi www.myseams.org

MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF A SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD

1. **Inform** friends, neighbors and other community members.
2. **Attend** a SEPAC meeting the second Wednesday of each month.
Meetings are at the Placer County Office of Education 1-530-889-5902
3. **Attend** a SEAMS Meeting.
Meetings are held the second Friday of the month upstairs at the Heritage Theater in Lincoln.
4. **Call** the Western Placer Unified School District.
Ask for a job description of a paraprofessional and to be on the sub-list.
5. **Assist** in the LINCOLN disABILITY AWARENESS FAIR.
Meetings are the third Monday of the month.
6. **Support** SEAMS by offering financial support and volunteer support for the LINCOLN disABILITY AWARENESS FAIR.
7. **Offer respite** for a parent with a special needs child.
8. **Encourage** school site organizations, such as the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) and School Site Council to support special education.
9. **Research** for a friend or family member.
10. **Invite** Mrs. Marcie Ciampi to be a guest speaker.
12. **Donate** a book on special needs to your local school library.
13. **Start** an after school enrichment program at a school.
14. **Volunteer** at a school.
15. **Become** a paraprofessional for a special needs child; no experience is required.

