# WHOLE SCHOOLING RESEARCH PROJECT

## VI.5 SUPPORT FOR LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

### KEY FINDINGS

Support by adults is most effective when it occurs in the general education classroom and assists the general education teachers both in developing effective, authentic, multi-level instruction for all students and helping to problem-solve around specific children.

Outcomes, as judged by teachers, were better in inclusive education when one of the two following conditions prevailed: (1) supports provided in the class by a respected colleague; and (2) effective teaching using a range of teaching methods -- typically involving cooperative learning, active projects, a range of strategies for presenting information, adaptations based on ability levels and learning styles.

Support is provided by a range of individuals, some funded through special education, and some through other sources.

Most effective schools developed a *support team* that developed building-wide, coordinated support services including coordination and collaboration among support staff in individual classes and focused on individual students. In such schools, *child study* meetings provided teachers an opportunity to obtain input from other staff.

The philosophy and resulting practices of support staff, as well as issues of competence and personality, influenced the partnership between support staff and general education teachers. In some cases, incompatibilities rendered support ineffective or even counterproductive.

Some special education teachers and support staff provided significant leadership for professional development and seeding of innovative teaching practice from one classroom to another.

Paraprofessionals served many roles, in some cases essentially helping to segregate the student from other students in the general education classroom, in other cases playing a facilitating role for inclusion and collaborating in teaching all students in the class.

In the literature on inclusive education, as well as the Whole Schooling framework, support is identified as a critical component. The argument goes something like this: “Yes, you will have students with more challenging needs. However, with those students comes additional support.” Indeed, inclusive education is often ‘sold’ to general education teachers with the promise of additional support in their classes.

In our study, we sought to understand the way that effective support works in a school working to be inclusive. From one perspective, in the schools we studied, support was seen as a critical part of the success of inclusive education, consistent with much inclusive education literature. From another perspective, the role of support in an inclusive school is more complex. How support is provided, how much is needed, and what support looks like varies dramatically depending upon interactions with other variables, particularly the intensity of needs of the child, the skill of the teacher in implementing authentic, multi-level teaching, the building of a community in the classroom, and the philosophies of both the general education teacher and support personnel, particularly the special education teacher. In this section, we explore the components of support, the various ways we saw support operating, and explore exemplary strategies and issues for improving support services.

## SUPPORT MODELS IN SCHOOLS

We observed several different approaches to providing support for inclusive learning opportunities in schools. In all models, we saw practices that seemed effective and others that were problematic. All of the study schools sought to have effective support systems. Compared to most schools, each school had exemplary components. Yet, each also had continuing challenges. While there was significant overlap in each schools configuration of support, each school had a very different feel and overall approach. Understanding support roles is complex given the differing professionals involved, the culture of the school, and the ways that philosophies and personalities may intermix. The chart on the following page provides a comparative description of the support structures in the intensive study schools. However, this chart tells only part of the story because variations occurred within each school from teacher to teacher, depending upon the relationships of the collaborating teachers, the impact of the overall philosophy of the school model, and other factors. We first provide a brief description that attempts to capture the essence of these different models.

### Trans-disciplinary team for clustered group support.

Armstrong has developed a particularly strong support system for inclusive education. Several *specialists* – a special education teacher, a speech therapist, a counselor, a Title I coordinator who provides substantive leadership in literacy instruction, and an occupational therapist-- share an office in the center of the school and coordinate support services in collaboration with general education teachers. In addition, special funding was approved through the district that, mixed with special education and Title I funds, has allowed the school to hire paraprofessionals for most classrooms in the school. In addition, a small number of paraprofessionals are assigned as one-on-one assistants with students who have significant behavioral challenges. Such paraprofessionals often helped support a student in the general education classroom, often using a parallel curriculum. In cases of severe behavioral challenges, a paraprofessional might work with a student in a separate, small therapy room on various activities.

The special education teacher, Title I teacher, and speech therapist particularly work together to provide in-class supports, supervising aides jointly with general education teachers. Each classroom is assigned at least one specialist for support. Through co-teaching, modeling is provided on teaching strategies for a variety of students with special needs.

Support staff and general education teachers have learned to work as a family team, all taking responsibility for all children in the school, constantly sharing information and ideas, particularly in informal discussions at lunchtime as specialists and teachers eat together in the office. Once per month, each teacher in the school has a planning session on Wednesday afternoon with the specialist team.

## Transdisciplinary Specialist Support Team

Betty, special education teacher, and Tracey, the speech therapist, talked about their working relationship as a team. The interviewer queried them regarding how they have developed as a team, how they cross over and share roles without conflict or apparent tension. "How do you describe what we do?" asks Tracey, a speech therapist in this K-3 school.

*Some of it comes with the comfort that we've gained over the years. I have watched Betty work in the classroom and I've seen the things that she does. When I am comfortable watching her, I know that I can do that. I see how she talks to kids, the cues she gives them, the counseling she gives to parents. The same thing with behavior. I write behavior plans. There aren't too many speech therapists who do that but I've watched the psychologist enough over the years and am comfortable with what they do, what a behavior plan looks like and feels like in the classroom.*

She raises both hands like she's holding a large beach ball for emphasis, eyes alert and mind grasping for words as Betty adds, "you've *been in* the classroom!!" Tracey laughs looking at Betty, "And I've *done* the behavior plans." "Yes, and that's the critical part," adds Betty as they both laugh in gentle enjoyment.

The interviewer comments that he is hearing them say that they have learned to cross roles because they have both been together in the classroom and have been open to doing what needs to be done to meet needs of children, rather than protecting professional role boundaries. You've been learning from one another, taking on each other's skills and roles. Tracey, says, "Right . . .

*I didn't start out with that knowledge. It was not part of my training as a speech and language pathologist. It is something I picked up here from being in the classroom and watching and learning. I have learned a lot from some of the better teachers as well – about behavior management, direction giving, how to support children in the classroom. Then I can share that with other teachers or send one teacher to another to obtain assistance.*

Later Tracey talks more about how the different specialists mix their roles as they learn from one another. "Certainly I am going to have them work on that grip while I am there," she explains. "It is just very easy to do if you know that is needed. It is still not my primary goal. It is Betty's or someone else's. But I know what all the goals are so I can carry over and use it." Betty is anxious to encourage this point as Tracey talks. "Yeah!" she says gently.

*In the same way, Betty is working on speech when she is doing reading lessons and so is the occupational therapist when she is working with a ball with children. She is saying the word 'bouncing, bouncing, bouncing'. She's doing*

*language development anyway, so she might as well focus in on what the goals are so we can all work from the same page.*

Betty, the special education teacher, is shaking her head in agreement, "that bringing in that sensory-motor focus and gross and fine motor emphasis helps our OT come a bit firmer into the fold. Since Betty [the part-time occupational therapist] has gotten here we have learned a lot from her and learned how to take that back into the classroom. Most of her work is done outside of the classroom because of her schedule ("and she uses big things", adds Tracey), "but she has taught us what to look for, what behavioral things might be related to sensory issues and that has helped". Tracey picks up this line of thought.

*Yes, it is looking at that kid who is in line and misbehaving. Now you can look at it and say, 'He is sensory deficient. If he is standing in line, he can't handle having someone touch him! Here we put him right in the middle of the line and he can't be touched forward or backward and he starts to get upset, starts moving his arms and poking other people. Is that a behavioral issue or a sensory integration issue? It turns out to be behavioral but that is not the cause!*

Later Betty and Tracey talk more about how they manage to be in the same place at the same time so that they can learn from one another.

*A lot of times we try to schedule our time in the classrooms where we will be together. We've not been able to make that work so well this year. In past years, however, we have scheduled ourselves together so we would be a team and go in and work with the classroom teacher all at the same time. Also, we do a lot of communicating in the office and just observing each other in small groups, just sitting and watching.*

Tracey adds,

*While we are in classes together, it is center time so that we are in small groups with children. Children are rotating around to different centers, some independent studies, and we will sometimes pull kids for different groups. This gives us the opportunity to see one another work with children. Or when we do writing workshops we all team together where there are three teachers working on one assignment with the children on their writing which is notoriously difficult for the kids, especially the second graders. We have gotten some tremendous writing when there are enough people, especially specialists rather than paraprofessionals only, who can help give the cues when they are needed.*

*We have a different set up here since we selected a new staff as we opened the school. On the other hand, 1/3 are new. We have been able to maintain and build the culture, in part, by supporting the new teachers. As a specialist team, we make lots of efforts to get in the classroom of new teachers. Every teacher here has a support person, whether the special education teacher, Title I teacher, speech therapist, each has someone.*

How do you support new teachers?

*We assign one of us to the new teacher right away. For example, one new teacher had a number of students with language delays so I was the logical choice, says Tracey. No kid in that class has a special education label, though there are a few we think may be learning disabled, but a number of kids at risk. She needed some support. She had some training on how to use phonology but does not know the approach that we use in this school. So I am structuring some time to go to her class and do a lesson to help her learn. It is the same type of lesson I would do if I pulled them out. We separate the class in two and I demonstrate how she might use the materials. We can dialogue during planning time and I can give her suggestions regarding how to assess students with language difficulties. So I am guiding her through that part of the day. My plan is focusing on phonology. However, the Title I teacher is helping her learn guided reading. So she has the key areas of reading instruction supported by other specialists who can provide her assistance.*

**Flexible teaming for authentic, multi-level instruction and community building.**

Those students identified as having particular needs are supported by the "STAR Team" (support team for students at-risk) to provide supports and collaborate with general education teachers. These include two special education teachers, two Titles I funded teachers, one teacher funded through a grant for class size reduction, a reading clinician, and a speech therapist. A social worker and school psychologist also work part-time. Finally, a full-time coordinator works provides training and support to children in conflict resolution through a grant with Providence Hospital. These individuals work as a team developing collaborative schedules for in-class support. Students are heterogeneously placed in rooms across the school with much collaborative conversation among teachers across grade levels. No special education or other pull-out classes exist. They work together to help meet individualized student needs. Community building and student-helping-student strategies are used throughout the school by many teachers as one source of support for learning.

**Rich and parallel support programs.**

Hamilton School has a wealth of resources to provide support for student learning. Support staff includes the following:

- Two special education teachers are co-teaching with several teachers to whom they are assigned.
- Bilingual education specialist and several paraprofessionals
- Gifted education specialist who provides consultation with teachers and conducts some pull-out learning activities with students.
- A school psychologist also serves in a dual role as a parent / community facilitator and liaison, helping to develop programs to promote drug and violence prevention that include support groups, drug and violence prevention information programs, and others.
- An Early Intervention Team, funded through Reading Recovery, works in the lower elementary grades to provide intensive services to support literacy skill development of students.
- Paraprofessionals assigned to individual students with challenging needs, such as a student with a severe and multiple disability or students with autism.

Hamilton particularly relies on a formalized process of collaborative consultation in which students are identified as having challenges. A teacher and support staff member meet and develop a written, targeted intervention plan for the student. Special education teachers and the speech therapist largely engage in collaborative co-teaching. Depending upon the classes and staff involved, this may look different. Increasingly, the focus has been for support staff to collaboratively plan and teach lessons that would help students with special needs but involve the total class. In some cases, co-teachers may lead the lesson or the general and special education

teachers may switch roles between leading and helping individual students. In some cases, the special education teacher has viewed the role as working with specific students on a caseload.

Special education support staff meet weekly as a Building Team, as they call it. During this time they may have formal collaborative consultations regarding students with teachers, plan and coordinate work, engage in dialogue regarding key issues.

**Clustered co-teaching and paraprofessionals.**

At Evergreen Elementary, the support structures put in place include multiage teaching, looping, paraprofessionals, and special education co-teachers. These staff members assist in developing the sense of care and support that pervades the school. Wednesdays are set aside for intensive planning among staff. Common Planning Time is created by early student dismissal on Wednesdays. In the morning, substitutes are provided so that special education teacher co-teachers can meet. One time per month, all co-teachers from all three buildings (elementary, middle, and high schools) meet.

In lower elementary, paraprofessionals and parent volunteers provide multiple supports for individualized assistance to students. There are often three or more adults in a classroom. In upper elementary, two special education teachers work with selected 'inclusion' classrooms, co-teaching a half day in each of their assigned classrooms. There are also additional programs to provide support for students: a service learning program in which high school students work in the classrooms with teachers and students; and HOST, a mentoring program in which community volunteers read one-on-one with students.

**Clustered co-teaching and special education core courses.**

At Rogers High School, students with mild disabilities and a small number with moderate disabilities may enroll in general education classes with no support, take a special education core class, or take a course that is co-taught by a general and a special education teacher. Students with disabilities are clustered in certain sections of classes so that the team-taught classes are comprised of approximately two-thirds general education and one-third special education students. The special education staff appears to be a close staff, sharing an office that allows for constant communication of information about students, and support for one another.

Each teacher-team determines the specific ways in which they will teach the class. In some teams, the classroom teacher serves as the lead teacher and the special education teacher walks around assisting all the students (not just the special education students). In other teams, both teachers share and trade roles in flexible ways, balancing their split of interaction, lecturing, etc. In some classes, the special education teacher looked at all assignments submitted by students on that caseload so that grades might be adjusted if necessary. Special education teachers were available for reading tests orally, adapting assignments, and planning lessons.

**Interdisciplinary learning teams.**

Drummond High School was a new school, only a few years old at the time of our study. From the beginning, the architecture of the school, hiring of staff, and building of the curriculum

was aimed in building grade level interdisciplinary teams, on which a special education teacher served as a support person. In addition, the school moved away from tracking of courses. Honors programs were open to any student based on their interest and choice. A contract for additional, intensive work was developed between the student and supervising teacher and results judged by a panel of teachers. The Advanced Placement courses similarly were open to all students. Teachers linked across subject lines, a project made easier with movable walls between classes that often allowed 2-3 teachers to work together with some 60 students, supported by a special educator. The school did maintain self-contained classes for students with mental retardation. However, these students also participated more fully in the life of the school than in many traditional high schools.

## PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

After examining our data from all the schools, we were able to identify a series of effective practices and guiding principles for support services. These principles are listed briefly in the table on the right.

**Table VI.5-2:**
**Principles for Effective Inclusive Support Services**

***1. Inclusive.*** Students are grouped heterogeneously, pull-out services are minimized, and segregation is not re-created in the general education classroom.

***2. Building community and behavioral challenges.*** Teachers are assisted in building a classroom community where children help one another.

***3. Multi-level, authentic instruction.*** Help design and implement multi-level, authentic, challenging, and scaffolded instruction.

***4. Adaptations.*** Assist teachers in designing and using needed instructional adaptations.

***5. Child services coordination.*** Support staff coordinate services across multiple classes and professionals.

***6. Teacher support coordination.*** Multiple services in a teacher's room are coordinated to insure consistency of approach.

***7. Professional growth.*** Teachers are given opportunities for collaborative growth and learning.

***8. Emotional support.*** Teachers have forums by which they get emotional support, opportunities share with one another, time and place for this to happen.

***9. Teacher empowerment*** Support staff seek to empower

While some schools clustered students in certain classes, the most effective schools intentionally and systematically worked to insure heterogeneous groupings of students across and within classes. Support staff then figured out their schedules based on how students were distributed. This process contrasted with schools that clustered students largely for the administrative convenience of support staff.

Support staff tended to play roles either involving collaborative teaching or helping, which too often tended to be pull-out or pull-aside with only students on a caseload. The best practices that we observed, however, employed support staff to assist the teacher in developing effective instruction and a classroom climate that was supportive of all children learning at their own level. Thus, these support staff would work with the teacher in helping build a classroom community and design lessons that were authentic and multi-level. In all cases, support staff helped to develop adaptations and modifications as these were needed. The most effective teachers helped incorporate these strategies into the overall instructional design.

Effective support teams worked in very flexible ways both to coordinate services across support professionals within an individual classroom and to develop a support structure for the

entire building. For the most effective schools, this process felt less bureaucratic and more personal, like a family.

Valued support for teachers had both a cognitive and emotional component. Teachers felt supported, part of a caring family. Support became one way that a community among school staff, children, and parents was experienced. Secondly, however, effective support provided ongoing opportunities for learning by teachers, a form of professional development. Finally, effective support always empowered teachers. Administrators supported initiatives in multiple ways as did support professionals. Problems occurred when support staff maintained their professional lines too rigidly, thus reducing the sense of flexibility necessary for empowerment to try innovations.

## ISSUES IN COLLABORATION

A range of issues became apparent as we observed support staff and general education teachers work with one another. Following are some key themes that we observed.

**Keeping children first.** Staff talked constantly of the needs of children. When support worked effectively, educators were able to focus on the needs of children rather than bureaucratic requirements or their own roles. In all the schools in this study, for example, we observed few instances where professional turf concerns intruded on the focus on the needs of children. However, there were notable exceptions. In one situation, the principal requested assistance by the social worker for two children with strong social needs. However, the social worker refused, saying that her caseload was already beyond that required by the contract. This same social worker became incensed by the activities of a project on conflict management that she felt intruded on her professional territory.

**Power**. We also observed interesting influences on between the making of decision-making related to differences in competence, philosophy, personal style, and needs. In some cases, the general education classroom teacher directed the activities of support staff. Sometimes this was welcomed, sometimes not. In other cases, we observed support staff essentially inform the general education teacher what they would be doing with an individual student. In yet other cases, an entire program was designed by support staff to be delivered in the general education classroom. Sometimes, similar programs were designed collaboratively between general and special education teachers. In the most effective cases, general and special education staff collaborated in making decisions. This required, however, a common philosophical framework adopted by all parties.

**Philosophy.** We observed differences across teachers and between general and special education teachers. Some teachers aimed toward more contemporary, innovative teaching philosophies and approaches, whereas others stood by traditional teaching methods – worksheets, lectures, fill in the blank or multiple choice tests. Many general education teachers incorporated elements of both in their teaching. Many special educators we observed were trained based on a behavioral philosophy, heavily steeped in minute skills and task analysis with little understanding of or appreciation for holistic instructional practices such as readers and writers workshop or cooperative learning. Most support staff were trained in a pull-out model and had to struggle toward new approaches that support students and teachers in the general education classroom.

This was an ongoing struggle, implemented with significant professional anxiety by special educators. In many situations we observed general education teachers using more holistic, child-centered methods who were frustrated by support staff who did not understand well how to work in their classrooms and who tended to pull children out or to the back or side of their class to work on minute skills. On the other hand, we observed other support staff who were intentionally learning about holistic general education practices with gusto helping to seed innovations from classroom to classroom. In other cases, the general education teachers, had a skills-oriented, teacher-directed instructional approach at which point a match might exist between the general and special education teacher. Following are some variations on matches and non-matches with expected results, most of which we observed in our study.

**Table VI.5-3: Matches of Teaching Philosophies and Practice**

| General education teacher | Special education/support staff | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Holistic, child-centered* | Skills, teacher directed | Mismatch – both teachers likely frustrated. Either special education teacher pulls students from the class or into a corner or hovers or the general education teacher directs the support teacher in specific activities that fit his/her instructional approach. Either way, little collaboration. |
| Skills, teacher directed | Holistic, child-centered | Mismatch – both teachers likely frustrated. Likely general education teacher plans and directs the lesson. The support teacher tries to facilitate more holistic thinking. (This does not happen often.) |
| Skills, teacher directed* | Skills, teacher directed | Match – Teachers happy. Often one teacher directs; the other (usually support person) is in helping role. Difficult to achieve genuine inclusion, however. |
| Holistic, child-centered* | Holistic, child-centered | Match – Teachers work collaboratively and flexibly in designing and implementing instruction. |

* Match and mismatch we observed.

**Balancing and sharing competence.** The balance of competence between collaborating partners can go either way. The support staff person was sometimes the more skilled teacher. We observed support staff acting as mentors and professional development guides. In one school, for example, teachers were having difficulty teaching math at multiple levels using a new math program. The district hired a support teacher who worked 1/2 time in the building and taught a 30-minute demonstration lesson each week. The teacher thus learned new skills that were used throughout the week.

**Beyond disciplinary territory.** Traditionally, different aspects of human beings have been claimed as the territory of different disciplines. In an interdisciplinary model, the team looks at the total needs of the individual together. In practical terms, all would look together at literacy, behavioral, social, and sensory-physical needs. This brings the wisdom of the total team to play and enhances the capacity of the team to engage in needed work.

We observed several schools working hard to move beyond disciplinary territory, some with more success than others. One school was particularly successful. In this school, we found that the staff explicitly understood that they were moving across disciplinary territories and were able to articulate a rationale for this process.

## AUTHENTIC TEACHING AND SUPPORT

We also came to see a relationship between outcomes of inclusive education as judged by teachers related to the interactions of two key variables: (1) support in the general education class by a respected colleague; and (2) effective multi-level teaching using a range of teaching methods -- typically involving cooperative learning, active projects, a range of strategies for presenting information, adaptations based on ability levels and learning styles. When these two efforts work together teachers tended to report high degrees of satisfaction. The Table below illustrates this relationship.

**Table VI.5-4: Outcomes For Students And Teachers By Interaction Of Quality Of Teaching And Support**

| SUPPORTS / TEACHING | Poor teaching | Moderate teaching | Good to excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Good in - class supports** | POOR | GOOD | EXCELLENT |
| **Fair to poor in class supports** | POOR | FAIR | GOOD |
| **Pull out supports: resource room, coordinated** | POOR | FAIR | GOOD |
| **Pull out resource room or special class. Uncoordinated** | POOR | POOR | GOOD |

At its simplest level, this chart illustrates the importance of good teaching that is based on the individual needs and functioning levels of the student: what we call Authentic Multi-level Instruction. However excellent the support, in our observations, it cannot compensate for teaching practices. On the other hand, the more effective the instructional practices, the less impact that support has on the judged outcomes. In this particular analysis, the outcomes were simply the opinions of the effectiveness of inclusion for students and teachers by the general and special education teachers involved.

As a summary reference, Table VI.5-5 below illustrates some key positive and negative support practices that we observed in schools.

| Table VI.5-5: Support Practices That Do and Do Not Support Inclusive Education | |
|---|---|
| **Positive Practices** | **Negative Practices** |
| Students with special needs are considered full members of the class.<br><br>General education and special education teachers collaborate as real partners, negotiating and sharing work in the class.<br><br>Collaborating staff share responsibility for all students in the class. Students know that there are 'two (or more) teachers' in the room.<br><br>Students with special needs are part of all aspects of the class so that outsiders find it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the 'special kids'.<br><br>Collaborating staff work together to design teaching at multiple levels that includes all students. 90% of collaborative time is spent this way and 10% on doing accommodations and adaptations. | Students with disabilities are clustered in one place in the room – at the back, on one side of the room, in their own row.<br><br>The special education teacher or paraprofessional serves as a helper copying or filling out forms, or helping a student "go through the motions."<br><br>An "included" student is enclosed within a wall of file cabinets to keep behaviors in check.<br><br>The special education teacher worked only with students with disabilities or other students who are on his/her 'caseload'.<br><br>The co-teacher, aide, or other specialist sat beside the student and had them work separately from the rest of the class in the back or a corner of the room.<br><br>The co-teacher primarily develops instructional adaptations and advice on how to teach differently for all students was not sought. |

## STUDENT PLACEMENTS

*Classroom make-up and decision processes*

Schools varied in how they handled placement of students in classes. The most obvious differences were related to two issues: (1) clustering or heterogeneous student placement in classes; and (2) personnel involved and the decision-making process.

### Clustering Students And Support Services

Three schools, two elementary and one high school, used a model that we could describe as clustered co-teaching. A fourth elementary school engaged in limited clustering. However, they were so effective at distributing students throughout the school that this was not obvious. During the time period of our study, Hamilton Elementary School shifted from clustered placement of students to a commitment to heterogeneous grouping.

In schools in which students were clustered based on certain characteristics, most often a special education label, students with disabilities were enrolled in certain classes at higher rates than their distribution in the school population, so that other classes at a grade level in the elementary school or subjects such as English in the high school simply did not include students with identified disabilities. In each situation, the perceived need to provide adequate support staff, on the one hand, and helping support staff to manage their time, on the other, drove this decision. Only in the elementary school that shifted from clustering did we hear concerns expressed about negative side effects of the clustering model. Support staff – special education,

bilingual, gifted teachers, speech therapists –saw clustering as a way to help them organize their work in classroom, minimizing the number of classes in which they were involved.

We observed many problems in clustering. Overloading one classroom with a disproportionate number of students with special needs meant fewer opportunities for other students to model learning and support students with special needs and created overtaxed, highly stressed teachers. Since some teachers did not have students with special needs, the teachers who did often felt over-burdened and unfairly treated. These sentiments were openly expressed at staff meetings. Teachers who had no labeled students, on the other hand, received no special support, even though many unlabeled students in their room needed assistance and general consultation about classroom management and instructional practice would have been helpful.

Numerous potential side effects grow out of the process of clustering of students. We were concerned that classes containing clusters of students with disabilities might become labeled and stigmatized. We were part of conversations and meetings in which teachers essentially bartered for who 'got' special students. Some teachers were particularly frustrated as they saw the 'inclusion' classes getting support in working with students with special needs. Such teachers felt that they had equally challenging students even though they were not identified with a special education label. On the other side, some teachers in the 'inclusion' clustered classes sometimes felt burned out. One very caring, supportive teacher told of one year in which she had many challenged students. "The students would have been fine," she explained. "But I had to go to so many meetings for IEPs and consultations with each of the support people that I didn't have time to teach."

After much discussion, one school in the study made the decision to move from clustered placements to heterogeneous placements, an initiative pushed by the general education teachers. The support staff had been resistant to this idea because they could not see how they could manage to provide support when children were spread out across all the classrooms in the school. Once the change was made, however, placement decisions were made first and then support staff worked out arrangements with general education teachers.

### Heterogeneous Placement And Distribution Of Support Services

Two schools used a system of heterogeneous placement of students by grade level teams. In the spring as such decisions were being made, teachers completed a simple form that included items regarding overall academic ability, behavioral challenges, race, and socio-economic status. This information was compiled and used to systematically heterogeneously group students in classes. They also considered

**Table VI.5-6: Heterogeneous Student Distribution**
***An Example***

| | Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic Ability** | | | |
| High | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Medium | 15 | 13 | 16 |
| Low | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| **Behavior** | | | |
| Excellent | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Average | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| Poor – high support needs | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| **Socio-economic status** | | | |
| High | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| Middle | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| Lower | 6 | 8 | 7 |
| **TOTAL IN CLASS** | **25** | **25** | **25** |

the way a particular group of children related to one another, and the personality and skills of the teacher compared to the styles and dispositions of the children. In these schools, support staff were an integral part of the decision-making process. Once decisions were made, support staff would work with the general education teachers to configure optimal provision of supports and services in the classrooms. By the second year of our observations, Hamilton Elementary had shifted to a similar process, borrowing from their observations at Meadowview, to facilitate heterogeneous student placement instead of clustering students.

In middle schools or high schools, scheduling was more complex given that students no longer remain in one classroom all day, learning all subjects from one teacher, together with the same group of classmates. We had hoped to see high schools eliminating tracked classes – lower level English and biology, for example. We saw some movement in this direction in Drummond High School, which had eliminated advanced placement classes, providing all students an opportunity to receive advanced placement credit if they developed and completed an individual learning contract that involved more advanced work. This option was open to everyone, based on interest rather than a placement test or previous academic record.

**Table VI.5-7: An Inclusive Continuum Of Services**
*Illustrative Example*

| | |
|---|---|
| Least supports and services | Collaborative team planning: general and special education, parents, other professionals. |
| | Collaborative consultation. Periodic consultation with teacher either in or out of class. Building relationships in the classroom. |
| | In-class support co-teacher. Periodic in-class assistance in adapting lessons, instructing special students or the whole class. Intentional assistance from classmates. |
| | Specialist assistance – speech therapy, occupational therapy, rehabilitation teachers, orientation and mobility, etc. |
| | Paraprofessional 'aide' part to full-time. |
| | In-class support co-teacher. More than half to full time. Circles of support / friends. |
| Greatest supports and services | All of above services, plus any additional consultative or direct services (e.g. Therapist for child and family), psychiatrist. |

### Interpreting The Continuum Of Services

*Responding to Special Education Rules and Regulations*

IDEA requires that schools have in place a continuum of alternative placements, originally designed to insure that students with disabilities have access to services and supports they need. Taylor[1] suggested that there is no reason to link more intense services and supports with segregated places, but that many degrees of service intensity may be delivered in general education settings and in the community. The table provides an illustrative example of an ***inclusive continuum of services*** that we saw in the schools that we studied. (Supports such as adaptive seating, augmentative

1 Taylor, S. (1988). *Caught in the continuum: A critical analysis of the principle of least restrictive environment*. Journal of The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 18(2), 75-83.

communication systems, and assistive technology can be combines with personnel support at any point on the continuum, depending on student needs.)

In Michigan, the state developed its own law and regulations. While these must technically be consistent with the federal law, the structure of Michigan's regulations has centered on prescriptive services provided in segregated schools and classrooms. During the latter year of this project, an effort by the state to bring its rules and regulations into closer match with the more inclusive intent of federal law floundered and was essentially withdrawn.

Staff in each of the project schools struggled with their desire to implement inclusive education and the bureaucratic structures imposed on them. Most schools, except those in the poorest locations, had disability identification rates far below that state average. In Michigan funding is still driven by identification rates, so school principals often struggled to maintain funding for support staff. In each case, the administrator felt strongly that the support provided in the general education classroom, as well as other instructional improvement efforts, reduced the need to formally label children for special services. As teachers at Meadowview said, "Students who are labeled special education don't get anything different than other students. We have support staff in our rooms who work with all students, and particularly those who are struggling. We teach in ways that help children learn at their own level."

## TEAMING FOR SUPPORT

In the schools we studied, substantial energy was put into developing working teams following various configurations and serving different purposes. Such teams helped provide a support mechanism that shaped the total culture of the school and contrasted significantly with comparison schools where, at best, teaming often meant listening in a group to an administrator hand out decrees and orders. In this section, we describe the various types of teaming we observed.

### Collaborative Teacher Teams

Collaborative teams involved two or more teachers working together at various levels of intensity from periodic collaboration on a learning activity or school project to collaboratively planning and teaching daily lessons to a larger group of students. A special education teacher and/or other support person was an integral member of such teams in the schools we studied. In three elementary schools, teachers were organized by grade levels and in one high school by departments (e.g. Science and Math, English and Social Studies). However, in one school that used looping and multi-age extensively, teachers grouped themselves as "lower elementary" and "upper elementary" in formal and informal teams. In the other schools, classes at different grade levels were intentionally placed next door to one another so that teachers of different grade levels developed collaborative, multi-age instruction linking activities across their classrooms. Drummond High School used an interdisciplinary team where social studies, literacy, math, science, and special education teachers worked together, rather than as separate subject departments. This school had movable walls and adjoining rooms specifically designed with collaborative teaching in mind. In several schools, teacher teams often used themes to link the subject areas and classrooms together. In one school, a team of teachers, including special

education and Title I support teachers, used a yearlong theme of space and ocean as an organizer for many activities. They met across grade levels to plan instruction throughout the year.

## Child And Teacher Support Teams

All elementary schools in our study organized *child study teams* where teachers brought concerns regarding an individual child to the attention of other staff. Such teams met either weekly or bi-weekly. Team meetings were attended by the teacher who referred a student, other teacher representatives, the principal, parents and family members, and support staff in the building, often a special education and Title I teacher (if applicable), counselor, social worker, or psychologist. These teams were called by different names in different schools. Team meetings varied in terms of formality and style.

Hamilton Elementary used a formalized process of *collaborative consultation* in which a teacher presented an issue and obtained assistance from others in working with a student. One teacher, for example, was concerned about Brandon, a child in her class who had diabetes. Brandon's blood sugar level was not stabilized, and the child frequently needed to stop school work and ask the teacher's help in administering a simple blood sugar test. The teacher was worried about the impact on the rest of the class and felt need for assurance that she had backup from other staff in case of a medical crisis. She obtained input from other teachers, two nurses who attended the meeting, and support staff in the building – psychologist, special education teacher, and the principal. She went away with some commitment for assistance from support staff in monitoring Brandon's situation and helping her in dealing with the class, support that was helpful to her. The team consultation gave her the opportunity to share her concerns, make people aware of her needs, and to get ideas for addressing her concerns about the reactions of Brandon's classmates.

In all the schools we observed, with the exception of one, staff reported that these teams were pro-active, problem-solving entities, providing teachers an opportunity to work together, obtaining suggestions and assistance from their colleagues. In one case, a school that served large numbers of low-income children, we were aware that such team meetings increasingly became places to vent frustration about children and families. The meetings served largely to develop procedures for referral to segregated classes or programs. At the same time, we were aware of several general education teachers who came to those meetings to advocate for the continued inclusion of such challenging students in their classes.

## Individual Student Teams

Teams were also built around students with special needs as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 plan. For example, Elizabeth, a student with a mild learning disability, had the special and general education teacher and the school psychologist on her team. Donald, a student who had a complex medical condition, severe mental retardation, and used a wheelchair and computerized communication device, had numerous people on his team – special education teacher, speech therapist, occupational therapist, assistive technology consultant, general education teacher, and nurse.

### Support Staff Teams

In the most effective schools, the *support staff* -- special education teachers, Title I and bilingual teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and others -- worked s a team deliberately and collaboratively to develop a comprehensive system of support. In Armstrong Primary, for example, the specialists met together frequently, discussing children, the needs of teachers, and strategies for particular students. They developed coordinated schedule of support for classrooms, sometimes intentionally working in a classroom together, at other times assuring they are in different places, depending upon teacher and student needs. Similarly, in Hamilton Elementary, support staff meet formally early in the morning twice per week to discuss students and develop coordinated schedules.

We also observed less effective practices in which specialists worked in parallel with only the children assigned to their own caseloads, developing their work scheduled separately from one another. For example, the special education support teacher and the gifted education specialist both work with Dennis, a fifth grade teacher, but did not coordinate their services or talk together about how to support him in instructing students with such differing abilities. In such situations, we saw some teachers struggle to accommodate many specialists coming in and out of their rooms.

**Table VI.6-8: Scheduling And Collaborative Teaching:**
*Example Schedule for Collaborating Support Teacher*

| | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8:45 – 9: 30** | 3rd grade | Kindergarten | 3rd grade | 3rd grade | 3rd grade |
| **9:30 - 10:20** | 2nd grade | 2nd grade | 2nd grade | 2nd grade | 2nd grade |
| **10:30 – 11:15** | 1st grade | 1st grade | Multi-age 3-4-5 | 1st grade | 1st grade |
| **12:30 – 1:30** | 5th grade | 4th grade | Kindergarten | 4th grade | Kindergarten |
| **1:30 – 2:30** | 3rd grade | 3rd grade | 3rd grade | 3rd grade | 3rd grade |
| **2:30 – 3:30** | Planning period | Planning period | Planning period | Planning period | Planning period |

## SCHEDULING AND COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Most of the schools in our study recognized the need for general education teachers and specialists to have formal planning time together. Several interesting and innovative approaches

were used. Meadowview Elementary School had organized block-scheduling procedures so that all grade level teachers had specials at the same time on a rotating schedule. Some schools schedule specials (art, music, gym) at the same time for teams of teachers so that they can meet together. The table below illustrates such a schedule that uses a six-day rotation to provide for 35 minutes per day of collaborative planning time. Another school blocked such specials for all lower elementary teachers in the morning, for upper elementary in the afternoon to allow for collaborative planning time. Evergreen School received approval from the voters and their unions to devote one-half day every week to 'Common Planning Time.' On those days, students were dismissed early to provide opportunities for teacher planning time and in-service programs.

Co-teachers who work with several teachers develop their schedule both around the needs of teachers for support and practical limitations of their own schedule. This can cause difficulties and challenges but can often work well. The next table illustrates the schedule of one co-teacher in Meadowview Elementary School. In many cases, support teachers are assigned to teams of teachers. In elementary schools that use multi-age teaching, one support teacher might be assigned to 'lower el' (K-2) and another to 'upper el' (3-5).

**Table VI.5-9: Block schedule for "specials" and planning times:**

| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8:40 – 9:15** | Art 5th-a<br>Music 5th-b<br>PE 5th-c | Art 5th -c<br>Music 5th -a<br>PE 5th - b | Art 5th - b<br>Music 5th - b<br>PE 5th - a | Art 5th - a<br>Music 5th - b<br>PE 5th - c | Art 5th - c<br>Music 5th - a<br>PE 5th - b | Art 5th - b<br>Music 5th - c<br>PE 5th - a |
| **9:20 – 9:55** | Art MA -a<br>Music MA -b<br>PE MA -c | Art MA -c<br>Music MA -a<br>PE MA -b | Art MA -b<br>Music MA –c<br>PE MA -a | Art MA -a<br>Music MA –b<br>PE MA -c | Art MA -c<br>Music MA –a<br>PE MA -b | Art MA -b<br>Music MA –c<br>PE MA -a |
| **10:00 – 10:35** | Art K -a<br>Music K -b<br>PE | Art<br>Music<br>PE | Art<br>Music K -a<br>PE K -b | Art<br>Music<br>PE | Art K -b<br>Music<br>PE K -a | Art<br>Music<br>PE |
| **10:40 – 11:15** | Art 4th -a<br>Music 4th -b<br>PE 4th -c | Art 4th -c<br>Music 4th -a<br>PE 4th -b | Art 4th -b<br>Music 4th -c<br>PE 4th -a | Art 4th -a<br>Music 4th -b<br>PE 4th -c | Art 4th -c<br>Music 4th -a<br>PE 4th -b | Art 4th -b<br>Music 4th -c<br>PE 4th -a |

5th –a = first 5th grade teacher and 5th –b is the second fifth grade teacher.
MA = 'multi-age teachers'. K = kindergarten.

Collaborating teachers sometimes helped general education teachers design teaching for diverse students. For example, at Meadowview Elementary, a teacher felt unprepared to teach science in his fourth grade classroom, and he talked frankly with the special education support teacher. They developed a plan in which the support teacher taught the science lesson each day, since she had strong skills in this area. During this time, the teacher assisted the support teacher and helped students with special needs.

**Table VI.5-10: Sample Schedule for A Day of Collaborative Teaching**

| TIME | TEACHER | Professional Support | Community Partners in the Class |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8:30 | Choice time | Share ideas for multi-level teaching. | Volunteers read with selected children. |
| 9:00 | Writer's workshop-rove, help edit, & assess | Special education teacher and speech therapist work with groups. We all collaborate in supporting all students. | Peer relations program teaches social skills once a week. |
| 10:00 | Reader's workshop | Special education teacher goes with class to library once a week. | |
| 10:45 | Read-aloud | | Several parents or community volunteers per month read books. |
| 12:10 | Class meeting | | |
| 12:30 | Specials | | |
| 1:00 | Math-one group. Same math skills. Kid experts. | Divide class in two with special needs student in special education teacher's group. Few minutes one on one. | |
| 2:00 | Theme study-integrating literacy, science & social studies | Share content. Get ideas for multi-level teaching. | Residents from local hospital talk to class once a month |

## IN-CLASS COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

We observed very differing relationships between general and special education teachers. For example, in one school an exemplary teacher taught children with very different abilities together in creative ways. However, she neither asked for nor wanted additional staff support in her classroom. She enjoyed teaching by herself, and had worked out processes by which students support one another successfully. Conversely, other teachers thrived on teaming with support staff.

Each school had similar and unique ways of structuring their support services depending upon a range of variables. These are not neatly categorized into various models. One dimension of variation is defined by those that relied on *heterogeneous grouping* in the classroom versus those that favored what we came to term *stable ability grouping*. On another dimension, some support services were provided in the general education class; others relied on pull-out or pull-aside methods. Table VI.5-11 illustrates the matrix of approaches.

| Table VI.5-11: Grouping Students for Instruction | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Heterogeneous Grouping** | **Ability Grouping** |
| **In-class** | Co-teaching<br>Conflict resolution<br>Social-emotional learning<br>Speech therapist language development whole class or small group<br>Enrichment program for all. | Flex groups for literacy<br>Centers<br>Guided reading |
| **Pull-aside / back** | | Direct instruction<br>One on one tutoring |
| **Pull-out** | | Direct instruction<br>One on one tutoring (special education; bilingual; Reading Recovery)<br>Extension activities (gifted)<br>Special education resource classes<br>Speech therapy |

**Four Approaches to Collaborative Teaching**

We also observed four key approaches by which support staff provide support to teachers, each based on a different theory.

**Pull-out remediation.**

Remediation aims to improve student performance in identified deficit areas. The assumption is that students possess within themselves either a deficit or special ability that creates needs that cannot be met in the regular classroom and that services must be provided by a specialist. In few cases did we observe the traditional mode, in which special instruction is provided in a separate classroom or therapy room. Three schools did maintain a two separate special education classrooms that they used in this manner. However, the other five schools did not use special education or "resource" rooms. However, specialists would often pull a student to the hall, to the back of the class, or to a small office when they used this approach. This strategy often conflicted with the philosophy and instructional plans of the general education teacher, resulting in some tension between the two professionals, In one school, a small groups of children walked to a small classroom once per day for Direct Instruction sessions. In some cases, the teacher pulling the students out worked with the teacher to choose the most appropriate time, but in other cases, pulled-out students had their day severely disrupted

**Adaptations.**

Frequently, support staff worked with the child in the regular classroom and developed needed *adaptations* to the curriculum or instructional method. Adaptations were specifically designed for an individual student and created a variation from the typical curriculum or instructional process. The state goal was helping the student be successful. In adapting curriculum, the existing curriculum and instructional approach were typically seen as unchangeable.

**Teacher need.**

In a small number of situations, we observed the support staff negotiating with the teacher based on identified needs of the teacher. In one situation, for example, a teacher wanted to use a running record (a systematic analysis of errors in a reading sample) on each child but needed to learn improve her comfort with the strategy. The support staff person spent 30 minutes twice per week demonstrating lessons in the class and mentoring the teacher. In another situation, a seasoned teacher felt inadequate in her science teaching. The support staff person had extensive experience in this area and decided to take the lead in teaching the science lessons. This simultaneously provided daily, supportive professional development for teaching science.

**Multi-level teaching**.

The fourth approach to support services is one in which support staff worked with general education teachers to design and implement multi-level curriculum and instructional activities that . . .

- Involve students of varying abilities working together in pairs or small groups
- Challenge each student at his or her level of ability
- Teach through authentic activities such as project-based learning
- Draw on student strengths and abilities
- Provide scaffolding that allows the student to engage in tasks just beyond his or her ability level, while providing needed assistance and instructional support.

The assumption in this approach is that instruction can be designed and implemented manageably at very diverse ability levels so that all students benefit. The focus is on meeting individual needs by creating a classroom that is designed for all students. In this approach, support staff assist teachers in designing and implementing learning activities. We observed several support staff and teachers working collaboratively in designing and implementing lessons in this way, examples that were described in the chapter on authentic multi-level teaching.

It is clear that the field of special education is developing new roles for itself, figuring out along the way how to function in an inclusive school, working in collaboration with general education teachers. What special education teachers do in general education classrooms, we have found, varies greatly upon their own abilities and philosophy and how this interacts with the general education teacher. Increasingly, we have seen special education and general education teachers collaborating in designing authentic, multi-level lessons that are implemented in partnership. In the example below, the special education teacher is working to set up an actual store in the classroom that will allow students, among other things, to work on math skills. This store functions much like a center, used by a small group of students at one time while other students are engaged in other activities with Melanie, the general education teacher.

> Sally, the special education co-teacher, is talking with the students about the roles that they will play in operating a store. "How can we make this display attractive so you would want to buy our products?" she asks, talking about peanuts and a box of saltines. She sends a student off to get the cash register another teacher is loaning them. "Who are shoppers?" she asks. "You are very lucky today. You are going to design a receipt. Raise your hand if you know what a receipt is." A bunch of hands go up. She sends another student to the office to get a school receipt to use as a model. She bit by bit gets each of the students involved in different roles and working on different projects setting up their store. They break into groups all over the place, talking, and lots of noise. After awhile Melanie and Sally ask for quiet by saying, "Give me five." They begin to pose a problem that the students must deal with in running their store. "The computers are down and we have a task. We have trouble in Motor City," says Sally as she and Melanie lead a discussion about what they will now do.

## Methods of Organizing Collaborative Teaching

We observed many types of support staff providing collaborative support within the classroom. We summarize these approaches below.

### Team teaching.

The most common method of collaborative teaching we saw between two or more general education teachers. Teachers team together for many purposes. In one school, two multi-age classes (grades 2-3) adjoin, and the teachers engage in collaborative instruction. Two teachers at Meadowview Elementary School decided to teach together in a larger room, and combined their two classes for one year. Other teachers work together on units organized by themes or collaborate in teaching particular subjects. At Drummond High School, interdisciplinary teams of science, social studies, language arts, and special education teachers had adjoining rooms and

worked together on projects throughout the year. One high school class read and wrote with students in grades 1-3 once per month, visiting the school for two hours in the morning. Similarly, many upper elementary classes pair with students in grade one for buddy reading and special projects. All these arrangements provided additional support and collaborative opportunities for both students and teachers. Below we provide a detailed example of some observations that illustrate the interplay of the general and special education teacher in a well-developed co-teaching process.

## High School Team teaching

**Pre-Algebra class.**

Brad was at the front of the class—covering a lesson about prime numbers. He used an overhead projector to show his work. Angela [co-teacher] was situated in the back of the room, also working on the same lesson and repeating the steps.

"Does anyone need help?" asked Brad, as the students called him.

Angela made the rounds, helping anyone who either raised a hand or looked as though they were having trouble.

**Machine shop**

At the start of class, students at regular armchair desks in a tiered section of the room. They were listening to their two instructors review the plans for the day. The other half of the huge shop was filled with automotive machinery. It is impossible to tell which is the special education teacher and which is the general education teacher. There is a true blending of instruction: one says something, the other adds to it. Following the class meeting, the students are dismissed to their hands-on work. Each of the teachers moves around the room, seamlessly.

**Horticulture class**

Bill and Art were the teachers. Fifteen students were in the class seated at lab tables. The horticulture class traditionally had students with a range of abilities, including not only special education students and general education students, but this was a class that students from the center program [severe disabilities] were permitted to elect.

"Take out your Introductory Horticulture books," requested Bill.

"Eric, take a different seat today," Eric was told after continuing to talk after class started.

"Twila, will you take a different seat today, so we need to get organized? Josh will you sit down? We want to get the thank you notes out and we also want to start to talk about our plant sale. The rough copies of the letters go in the SAE book. I'll need to see Olivia and Alesha up in the front. "

Later, Bill explained this was the first day back after the class participated in a flower arranging exposition held at the civic arena. The students, he thought, were experiencing a letdown after all that excitement.

"Suppose I want to organize the plants that are in the hallway? … If you were to organize the plants, there are several ways to do it, so I'll just talk, and you take your notebooks out. Write down "ways to organize plants." Only write down one group of words at a time…. Annual…perennial …and bi-annual…. If we were to organize this way, what would you have to know about the plants to do that?

A student shouted out: "How long they grow."

"An annual plant--how long does it grow," asked Bill?

"One year…. If I want to grow annual plants, I'd have to put them in every year….

How about perennial? How long does a perennial grow?

Silence.

Art, the second teacher helps out.

"Well think about it, we just reviewed annual."

They understood, and the lesson continued. Bill continued to lecture and Art walked around sometimes whispering in some students' ears or looking at their notebooks with them. After the lecture portion of the class, there was time to write thank you notes and do other flower related hands-on projects. A lab assistant worked in the back of the room wrapping flower stems. One of the students picked up one of the flowers and gave it to a student in a wheelchair to smell. Other students were unpacking flowers that had arrived. One asked if they should be cut.

"Yes."

**Differing styles of interactions in the school.**

It is up to each team to work out the specifics of how they will teach the class. In some teams, the classroom teacher appears to be the lead teacher and the special education teacher walks around assisting all the students, not just the special education students. In other teams, it is nearly impossible to tell which teacher is which as there is a balance of interaction, lecturing, and other teaching activities. In some classes, the special education teacher looks at all assignments submitted by students on that caseload so that grades may be adjusted if necessary. In other teams, one teacher is available for reading tests orally and adaptations such at this. Not all students take part in the team-taught classes, but they are very popular. Those students determined to have the greatest need are scheduled in team-taught classes. In this manner, all students are equal; no one knows who is a special education student and who is a general education student.

**In-class collaborative teaching by support teachers**.

We observed collaborative support by other specialists than special education teachers who included:

- Title I (federal funds for schools with high concentrations of low income students)
- Bilingual education
- Gifted and talented education

Special education and bilingual teachers had specific students assigned to their caseload, for whom they are responsible. However, they were also allowed to work with the total class in many schools as long as the individualized needs of the students were being met. For example, Sally, the special education teacher, and Jasmine, the general education teacher, planned collaborative lessons and taught them together. Both teachers traded roles in leading the class, helping groups work on projects, and providing direct skills instruction to individual students or small groups as needed.

**In-class collaborative teaching by related services specialists.**

Many other specialists provide what IDEA calls *related services*, "transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education"[2], and may also be available, depending upon student need. In inclusive models in our schools, speech therapists came into the classroom and assisted students in the context of a class communication activity, often with a small group, sometimes with the whole class, where the skills of the speech therapist were used to promote language development of all children while targeting the specific needs of a student with special needs. For example, one speech therapist worked with a student or small group of students on the articulation and production of specific sounds as they sign a song or read text aloud. The same IEP goals and objectives were practiced during literature circles or small group discussions. Peers served as fluent role models and supporters for their peers with speech/language challenges, naturally reinforcing and expanding assistance provided by the speech therapist. We observed specialists providing direct services in the general education classroom and indirect, consultative services to assist the teacher and other specialists in working with a student.

**In-class team instruction.**

In some schools, teams of support staff worked with teachers to provide collaborative instruction. In some elementary schools, teams in the lower elementary grades assisted the classroom teacher in intensive literacy instruction. In Hamilton Elementary, for example, a reading specialist supervises a team of one teacher and three paraprofessionals, individuals who are not certified as teachers but are hired to provide instructional assistance, who spend 45 minutes each day in the first and second grade classes working with the classroom teacher. They put the children into small groups for reading and writing instruction. At Meadowview Elementary School, the speech therapist and special education teacher team with the classroom teacher to do whole and small group literacy instruction.

2 United States Department of Education, 34 CFR Parts 300 and 303: Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities, Final Regulations. Washington: Federal Register, May 12, 1999.

**In-class support by paraprofessional**.

Paraprofessionals were used by many schools, to provide assistance to students and teachers. In our study, we observed much potential and much work to be done in improving the roles of paraprofessionals. In some cases, paraprofessionals were assigned to one specific student. In most cases, these were students judged to have behavioral challenges and/or significant cognitive disabilities.

The roles played by paraprofessionals assigned to individual students varied based on the overall culture and approach of the school as well as the approach by the teacher. In one case, a paraprofessional assigned to a child with autism had a very close relationship with the mother, was seen as the prime conduit of information and interaction by the parent, and spent much one-on-one time with the child in the classroom to the side of the class. The general education teacher, however, both had substantial experience and training with children with autism. During the year, she gently worked towards better integrating this child and pulling the paraprofessional into broader helping roles in the class. (As frequently happened, the paraprofessional stayed with the student as he moved through the school year after year. A result of this is often that the paraprofessional sees the student as "her" child, rather than as a member of the class and the responsibility of the general education teacher.)

In another situation, the paraprofessional assigned to a child with severe multiple disabilities frequently played a role close to co-teacher or assistant teacher, leading group discussions and even taking over responsibility for the classroom for short periods. She would also work with "her" student off to the side on occasion. The children in this classroom themselves took on roles helping the student with disabilities, and one or two were always at the table with him. They would move his wheelchair from place to place for small group work. The paraprofessional did assume total responsibility for the student's personal care needs.

We observed some other situations where the paraprofessional helped to distance the child from the rest of the students. One child in a third grade class had his desk, the only individual desk in the room, off to the side where the paraprofessional engaged in one-on-one, parallel curriculum activities with him. Ultimately, several students' parents in such situations chose to have them return to a segregated class due to their social isolation in the school.

In other situations, paraprofessionals were assigned to the class as a whole. One school sought to have a paraprofessional full-time in every class. This school relied heavily on centers and small group instruction. Paraprofessionals were trained as part of the instructional team, working particularly with lower functioning students. In another school, paraprofessionals served as part of an early intervention literacy team that came 45 minutes several times a week to lower elementary classes. They received training in implementing a highly structured program based on guided reading.

Interestingly, in three schools paraprofessionals were used very little. In the two high schools, students had very mild disabilities. In the third school, however, an elementary school, paraprofessionals were not used even in classrooms with students with moderate disabilities. However, this changed with a new administration concerned with students with behavioral challenges.[3]

## Volunteer Support And Community Agency Collaboration

Community resources provided various types of support in the schools we studied. These included volunteers – parents and community members – as well as agencies that also worked with children and families. Parents and others from the community not only to baked cookies and provided refreshments but read stories to classes, mentored individual students during or after school, and otherwise served in roles similar to those assigned to paraprofessional staff. Community agencies also brought specialized resources to the school. The schools in our study all drew in substantial ways on volunteer resources and agencies in the community. The profile for each school was quite different, depending upon local connections. At one school, for example, a hospital sent interns into the school on a weekly basis to teach students a science lesson related to the body. Additionally, a violence prevention organization brought a special program into the school to provide emotional support via group meetings with students and training of students in conflict resolution. In two other schools, special programs had been established where business employees or local community members were provided training in mentoring in literacy and reading and would spend time with one or more children on a scheduled basis.

## Media Specialists and Instructional Support

We found that in several schools media specialists, previously called school librarians, were important resources to teachers, aiding them in locating written materials of various levels of difficulty, providing assistance to individuals and groups of students engaged in authentic research and study projects, and providing training to students in using computers and other media. In one school in particular, the media specialist explained that she had thought of becoming a special education teacher but decided that she could have more impact as a media specialist. When classes came for reading and research activities, she was aware of and reached out to students with disabilities. This individual also was the central organizer of a yearly circus, put on with all the lower elementary teachers, where some students did research regarding famous circus performers, dressed as these individuals, and acted their role in the circus as each class played roles of different circus acts involving all the children in a production in the high school gym.

[3] We are using the traditional mild-moderate-severe continuum here.

## ROLE OF SPECIALISTS IN THE POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING OF THE SCHOOL

What role do support staff or specialists, non-classroom teachers in the school play in the overall political structure and decision-making in the school? Another related question is: What is the status and formal and informal influence by support staff? We found this to play out in very different ways, and we saw some degree of shifts in the schools over our time there.

In some schools, support staff tended to be less influential, and had lower status than general education teachers. This was, in part, a function of the perceived competencies of at least some support staff and job changes that occurred. For example, in one school, a teacher who was viewed by many as largely ineffective was placed in a support teacher role, seemingly to get her out of the classroom.

In other schools, however, the support staff had powerful, influential roles. In Armstrong Primary, the principal relied on the team of specialists as collaborators in making many decisions and in helping to set a climate for the entire school. This is reflected in the interview reported earlier with the special education teacher and speech therapist. This team met formally and daily ate lunch together, building community with one another while discussing many issues related to children, families, and teachers. What we have called a trans-disciplinary team also functioned as a community leadership team. From our observations, teachers respected their leadership and support.

In Hamilton Elementary, the support staff similarly had more influence and power. However, this had a different flavor to it. The school administration provided much opportunity for discussion about inclusion, support, and the roles of all involved. Yet, there seemed a tendency to focus on 'my program' as much as having a vision of the entire school. When we first began observing in this school, students with various special needs were clustered in selected classes in each grade level: one teacher received many special education students, another received bilingual students, and another received gifted students. These decisions were made entirely by the support staff to make it easier to schedule their time. After much discussion, the entire staff decided to shift this decision-making process so that grade level teams were the prime decision-makers for student placement.

In this same school, support staff, of whom there were many, tended to operate in parallel. The special education staff met as what was termed a "building team" twice per week, focusing on various programmatic and student issues. It was in these meetings that formal collaborative consultations could be scheduled by a teacher. However, we were not aware of either formal or informal collaborative planning regarding interventions in the classes of individual teachers between special education, the early intervention literacy program, the gifted specialist, or bilingual teachers. Each of these appeared to be seen as the 'territory' of the individual specialists.

This manner of operating also carried into the classroom. Some support staff, particularly one special education teacher, worked collaboratively with the general education teachers to plan lessons, in which they would often shift roles. In some cases, several support staff collaborated with the general education teacher to develop centers where students shifted from center to center. In other cases, however, the special education teacher would pull students off to the side or attempt to help them; or pull the student out of class. The bilingual and "gifted" teachers did likewise. As a result, students would be coming and going throughout the day. In several classes,

the classroom teacher had little input into the activities and schedule of the support staff and felt frustrated with what was occurring, feeling it was not the best approach for the child.

These and related observations in other schools point to the potential problems and also the potential use of support staff in facilitating positive change in a building. Particularly when support staff and the administration have a coherent vision, working relationships with teachers are developed which allow both leadership input from support staff but also decision-making by teachers, support staff have potential to be facilitators of change and ongoing professional development.

## CONCLUSION

Support plays an important role in building an effective inclusive school. However, given the many relationships, professional disciplines, and approaches that are possible, effective support is very complex. This study highlighted many of these dimensions. Additional, detailed study of support models and effective practices is needed as inclusive schooling develops and matures.