



Overcoming the Separation
Between General and
Special Education

ILD Conference

March 13, 2009

Harvard University

Welcome and Introductions

- Stephen Gould, Ed.D
- James Earley, Ed.D
- Patti Sclafani-Hinkley, MA
- Kathleen Fucci, M.Ed

Objectives

- To review current conditions regarding the implementation of Special Education
- To provide a vision of a preferred future
- To describe approaches to overcoming the separation between general and special education
- To identify criteria for assessing progress
- To outline approaches for maintaining focus and sustaining improvement efforts

Roles and Responsibilities

How many in the audience are:

- General education teachers?
- Special education teachers?
- Administrators?
- Guidance counselors?
- Psychologists?
- University teachers?
- Others?

Where Are We Now?

Turn to a person next to you and for the next 2 minutes discuss:

- Where are we now regarding the status of educating students with learning differences (in your school)?

Current Conditions or Once Upon a Time?

- Two parallel separate systems for General and Special Education

Gartner and Lipsky (1987)

At least half of the learning disabled population could be more accurately described as:

- slow learners
- students with second language backgrounds
- disruptive in class
- often absent
- move from school to school
- average learners in an above average school system

Where Do We Want to Go?

- It is not special education but the total educational system that must change

Where Do We? (cont'd)

“ A coordinated and collaborative team approach to service delivery involving all educational and related service professionals whose work is directly connected to student learning outcomes”.

---M. Wang

What Does It Look Like?

- General education and specialists collaboratively plan and team teach
- All teachers use diagnostic and formative assessments
- Students use self-scheduling boards
- Teachers and students are engaged in a variety of simultaneous teaching and learning activities

How Will We Get There?

- It is not special education but the total educational system that must change

How Will We? (cont'd)

- Clearly articulate, communicate, share and reinforce external norms for practice
- Create opportunities for teachers to routinely interact around common problems of practice
- Redefine the roles of general and special education staff, administrators and others who provide instructional leadership

How? (cont'd)

- The role of the general education teacher
- The role of the specialist
- The role of the principal
- The role of the district leader (special education administrator, assistant superintendent or superintendent)

Co-planning and Co-teaching

- The process
- Some examples of a model

How Will We Know We Are Getting There?

- Use protocols to assess the degree to which norms for collaborative and instructional practice are in place

How Will We Maintain Focus and Sustain Momentum?

- Review, communicate and reinforce external norms for practice
- Establish/participate in induction, mentoring and coaching programs
- Schedule common planning time for collaboration
- Create lesson study networks within schools and beyond

Conclusion

- What kind of people are we?
- What kind of society do we wish to develop?
- What values do we honor?

Ripples

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

----Robert F. Kennedy