The Strengths and Weaknesses of Segregated School Settings

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The Strengths and Weaknesses of Segregated School Settings

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St. John Fisher College
Capstone Project
Fall - 2007
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Abstract:

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Introduction:

The evolution of inclusion has gone through many transformations. At the center of this discussion rests the essential issue of how “special” or “exclusive” the education of student’s with disabilities should be. This essential issue has generated much controversy. Where should students with special needs be taught, alongside or separate from their non-disabled peers? This issue of placement seems to have superceded the issue of instruction. Full inclusion advocates argue that all students, regardless of their disability, should attend their neighborhood schools. Those opposing full inclusion have argued for a “full continuum of alternative placements” which would allow every student with disabilities to receive an appropriate education. Alternative placements may include resource rooms, self-contained special education classrooms, separate or segregated schools, residential schools or hospitals if necessary. Even the terminology of special education that is used to define its characteristics has changed over the years. What is meant by inclusion, full-inclusion, segregated settings, and separate classes or facilities? The purpose of this paper is to investigate the history of educating students with special needs and to explore the effectiveness of settings within the general education school and separate locations.

Core Issues in the Inclusion Debate:

According to Robert L. Osgood (2005), the main concerns that have remained at the center of discussion regarding inclusion and segregated settings are the following: Which setting works best, segregated or integrated? Where should the money go, into general education schools or separate facilities? Who is in charge of making decisions,
implementing instruction and evaluating the success of students and programs? Is an establishment of community essential among students in classrooms? Inclusion advocates stress community building in classrooms yet the condition and image of disability makes this a complex and difficult goal. The deaf population in particular has challenged inclusion as a threat to their sense of individuality and community. Since 1954, state and federal laws have played a powerful position in the movement towards inclusion. However, school districts have had great difficulty in maintaining the demands that the legislation expects for the education of students with disabilities. Throughout much of the social history of the United States, disabled persons have often been thought of as the “others,” ostracized socially, intellectually, politically, and economically. Lastly, to what degree are “integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion moral or ethical rather than legal or practical issues?” (p.11) Osgood states that all of these issues share three central questions: “Where shall such education take place? Who should be responsible for it? What, if anything is so truly special about special education that separate educational settings are necessary?” (Osgood, 2005, p.12).

**Rationales for Segregation in the early 1900’s**

During colonial times in America, people with disabilities were marginalized to the outskirts of society. Any services to children with disabilities were small and were provided at the discretion of the local school districts. Methods used to isolate persons with disabilities included keeping them hidden and protected within the family setting. Other methods included institutionalization. Many faced “ostracism, contempt, and misunderstanding” (Osgood, 2005, p. 22). In the later part of the 18th century, the
"Pennsylvania Hospital began admitting mentally disturbed patients to a mad ward. The deplorable conditions included placing patients in basements where they were often isolated and shackled. Medical treatments of the time included bloodletting" (Osgood, 2005, p.20).

By the 1900’s, public school systems became firmly established. Schools had to develop programs and different approaches to reach the needs of children who were disabled. "Segregation for these children was advocated by the vast majority of school professionals and researchers, who relied on two fundamental arguments: that segregation was necessary for efficient classroom and school operation, and that separate programs for disabled children was in their best educational and psychological interests" (Osgood, 2005, p23).

Psychologist and special education pioneer J.E. Wallace Wallin (1924) detailed why students with disabilities should be segregated from the regular classroom. In his influential text, he noted first "the benefits which accrue to the regular grades and the normal pupils from the removal of the subnormals" (p.92). He maintained that "mentally disabled students represent an inassimilable accumulation of human clinkers, ballast driftwood, or derelicts which seriously retards the rate of progress of the entire class and which often constitutes a positive irritant to the teacher and other pupils" (p.93). He claimed that because these students were not able to do their work, they developed serious behavior problems and spending time trying to help these students "would seem like robbing bright Peter to pay dull Paul. This constitutes one of the strongest arguments in favor of the policy of organizing separate classes for children who can not possibly keep up with the pace of the regular grades" (Wallin, 1924, p.93). Wallin argued that
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Segregated settings were more beneficial for the child with disabilities. Wallin (1924) wrote, "In the special classes deficient children are relieved of the...disheartening, cruel, and unjust competition with their superior fellows...They also escape from the taunts, jeers, jokes, and gibes sometimes suffered at the hands of their normal playfellows...In the special class...they will encounter an atmosphere of mutual understanding, helpfulness, and sympathy" In addition, students will receive "more aid and encouragement" and a reprieve from "a maladjusted curriculum which they cannot master" (Wallin, 1924, p.93). Osgood (2005) reported that the initial reason for "separate special education was the apparent benefits it served teachers, administrators, and other school personnel in facilitating the growth, power, and influence of school systems and easing the already arduous tasks of teaching in the era of a heightened emphasis on and enforcement of compulsory education laws" (p.30). Separate special education was thought of as being good for administration and beneficial to the child.

Evolving Terminology

Special education and the construct of disability have constantly changed over 200 years of history. Consequently, the terminology has evolved over time. One of the most obvious changes concerns the labels that are used to classify and describe categories of disabilities. Terms to describe mental disabilities during the 1800's have ranged from idiocy to feeblemindedness. By the 1900's, terms used to describe mental retardation included moron, imbecile, idiot, backward, borderline, subnormal, and dull normal or dullard. Other descriptors for cognitive disabilities moved from mental defect, to mental deficiency to intellectual or cognitive disability. Individuals identified as having these conditions were called mentally defective, mentally deficient, mentally retarded, mentally...
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challenged and differently abled. Behavioral disability terminology changed from moral insanity, to moral imbecility, to incorrigibility, miscreant, delinquency, emotional disturbance, and behavior disorder (Osgood, 2005, p.6). Today, the terminology has changed to putting the person first before the disability. It is ironic that the stigmatization of labels persists yet without labeling or classification of a disability, students would not receive the benefits they deserve.

In addition, the terminology of placements for students has changed over the years. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2005), settings of placement include the following:

- **Regular classroom** – Classroom settings in which nondisabled students as well as those with disabilities receive instruction. Students receive special education and related services for less than 21% of the school day.

- **Resource Rooms** – Supplement to education in regular classrooms. Students placed in resource rooms are considered for special education and related services between 21% and 60% of school day.

- **Separate classes within regular school building** – Students are considered to be placed in separate classes if they receive special education and related services for more than 60% of the school day and are in self-contained special education classes for all or part of the day.

- **Separate public day schools** – Public schools that only students with disabilities attend.

- **Separate private day schools** – Private schools that only students with disabilities attend.
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- *Public residential facilities* – Facilities at which on-site educational services are provided.
- *Private residential facilities* - Facilities at which on-site educational services are provided.
- *Correctional Facilities*
- *Homebound or hospital based instruction*

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2005), dropout rates have declined for students in most disability categories between 1994-2003. However, students with emotional disabilities have consistently had the highest drop out rates of all disability categories.
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Table 2-2. Students ages 6 through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, by educational environment and state: Fall 2003

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Changes of Special Education 1930-1960

During the Depression era, many historians found this period of time to be plagued with "dismal conditions, and administrative contradictions...with special and regular education drifting further and further apart and the status and resources of special education students, classes, and teachers sinking even lower" (Osgood, 2005, p. 37).

Efforts for education towards employment during this time period focused on the "normal" population first. People with disabilities were marginalized to the outskirts of society. In the late 1940's, Elise H. Martens, a leader in special education research, conducted a survey and found that special education legislation varied severely from state to state. In summarizing her findings, Marten wrote, "five-sixths of our States have now taken the step of legally recognizing the place of special education in local districts as an essential feature of the State's educational system" (Osgood, 2005, p.38). By 1950, this progression represented an important advancement in special education policy and practice from simple, permissive legislation to extensive planning and funding of special education programs. Martens listed recommendations in her investigation that included "all exceptional children should be identified and attend school; that they had the right to appropriate educational services from an early age through adolescence, whether in school, home, or hospital; that each state should provide leadership, guidance, and especially sufficient funding to local districts as they develop special education programs; and that the state should encourage the preparation of well-qualified personnel to ensure that exceptional children are well taught and well prepared for life adjustment" (as cited in Osgood, 2005, p 39).
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Another influential work of this time period was the publication of *The Education of Exceptional Children*, part II of the forty-ninth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Prominent scholars of special education wrote that the purpose of this volume was to “furnish valuable guidance to teachers in regularly organized classrooms, to school administrators and supervisors, and to the parents of children requiring unusual educational programs and facilities” while “stimulating further progress in the development of teacher-training programs….and facilitating the work of all classes of teachers in dealing with pupils whose learning experience are rendered ineffective by educational handicaps of different kinds” (Osgood, 2005, p 40). This volume of work and Marten’s survey help to set the stage for discussions and developments that would prove critical to the growth and changing nature of special education during the 1950’s.

**The History of Special Education Law**

As time has progressed, advocates for students with disabilities organized and changes in law began to take place. Many children with disabilities who were admitted to public schools still received no special services. The launching of Sputnik by the Soviets in 1957 and the perceived danger of nuclear means spurred Congress to pass the National Defense Educational Act of 1958 (NDEA). This act provided grants to improve science and math teaching (Martin, Martin & Terman, 1996).

Shortly after the signing of NDEA, President Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-926. This provided financial support to educational institutions to train personnel to teach children with mental retardation. In 1963, this law was expanded to train teachers in a broader range of disabilities (Martin et al., 1996).
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In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed which "subsidized direct services to selected populations in public elementary and secondary schools, and it remains the primary vehicle for federal support of public schools today." This Act did not "provide grants on behalf of children with disabilities." Later, Congress passed Public Law 89-313, which "provided that children in state operated schools for the handicapped could be counted for entitlement purposes..." (Martinet al., 1996, p. 27).

In the early 1960's, advocates for children with disabilities lobbied for a "special administrative unit at the highest level, a bureau, in the U.S. Office of Education." The Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped (BEH) was authorized in 1966 under Title VI of the ESEA. This program which "provided grants to states to initiate, expand, or improve programs for educating children with disabilities" became known as Title VI, the first "education of the handicapped act" (Martinet al., 1996, p.27).

According to Martin et al. (1996), "until the mid-1970s, laws in most states allowed school districts to refuse to enroll any student they considered "uneducable," a term generally defined by local school administrator" (p. 28). Many students were turned away or placed in inappropriate programs. For example, "children of normal intelligence with physical disabilities were placed in classes designed for children with mental retardation" (p.27). Many angry parents pursued mandatory laws, which would "provide partial funding and required local school districts to offer special education to children with disabilities" (p.27). Despite these funds and laws, many students with disabilities were still underserved or unserved in their local school districts. It took Congress and the federal courts to change the tide.
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1970 to the Present

The Fourteenth Amendment states in part, “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (www.constitution.org/col/intent_14th.htm). This clause of due process was interpreted in special education as giving “parents specific rights to prior notice, to discuss changes in a child’s education plan before they occurred, and to appeal decisions made by school districts” (Martin et al., 1996, p.28).

Between 1971 and 1973 two important court cases were pivotal in protecting the rights and educational needs of students with disabilities. The case of Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania contested a state law that “specifically allowed public schools to deny services to children who have not attained a mental age of five years at the time they would ordinarily enroll in first grade” (Martin et al., 1996, p.28). This ruling provided a free public education to children with disabilities up to the age of 21. Furthermore, it set the precedent and clear preference for inclusion and mainstreaming.

The case of Mills v. Board of Education in 1972 was brought on by the parents of seven children of varying disabilities against the District of Columbia. In this suit, the District of Columbia had denied educational access to these children on the basis of their disability. The district claimed that it was not economically feasible to educate these children. The court ruled “school districts were constitutionally prohibited from deciding that they had inadequate resources to serve children with disabilities because the equal
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protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment would not allow the burden of insufficient funding to fall more heavily on children with disabilities than on other children (Martin et al., 1996, p.28). This ruling had monumental effects for the rights of children with disabilities. “Children with disabilities had an equal right to public education offered in a form that was meaningful for them, and when the school considered a change in their status (including suspension, expulsion, reassignment, or transfers out of regular public school classes), the children were entitled to full procedural protections, including notice of proposed changes, access to school records, a right to be heard and to be represented by legal counsel at hearings to determine changes in individual programs, and regularly scheduled status reviews” (Martin et al., 1996, p.28).

As court cases continued to make the states responsible for providing “free, appropriate education to all children, regardless of disability” soon began the passage of federal legislation. States were looking to the federal government to “provide consistency, federal leadership, and federal subsidy of the costs of special education” (Martin et al., 1996, p.29).

The evolution of federal law to end the discrimination of students with disabilities progressed to the passing of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which “provided that any recipient of federal assistance must end discrimination in the offering of its services to persons with disabilities.” However, Section 504 “offered no funding and no monitoring and was virtually ignored for twenty years” (Martin et al., 1996, p.29). In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. “This act required that all students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education and provided a funding mechanism to help with the excess costs of offering
such programs” (Martin et al., 1996, p.2). In 1983 and 1990 this act was changed with amendments and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

According to Yell (2006), the six main principles and requirements of IDEA include the following: “Zero Reject – locate, identify, & provide services to all eligible students with disabilities; Protection in Evaluation – conduct an assessment to determine if a student has an IDEA related disability and if he/she needs special education services; Free Appropriate Public Education – Develop and deliver an individualized education program of special education services that confers meaningful educational benefit; Least Restrictive Environment – Educate students with disabilities with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate; Procedural Safeguards – Comply with the procedural requirements of IDEA; Parental Participation – Collaborate with parents in the development and delivery of their child’s special education program” (p.10). IDEA was amended in 1997. Yell (2006) states that the underlying theme of IDEA ’97 was to “improve the effectiveness of special education by requiring demonstrable improvements in the educational achievement of students with disabilities”(p.17).

The next critical event in special education law was President Bush’s signing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. President Bush stated, “These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America.” According to the U.S. Department of Education, NCLB is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents and students, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works best based on scientific research (http://www.ed.gov/print/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html).
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Since 1976, the U.S. Department of Education has annually reported the number of students between the ages of 6-21 with disabilities who receive services under IDEA. The categories of disabilities include the following: specific learning disabilities, speech/language impairments, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, hearing impairments, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, autism, deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury and developmental delay.

Inclusion Advocates

Many inclusion advocates argue that inclusion is the right and ethical choice. The separation of students based on their disabilities is reminiscent of the civil rights era and African Americans segregation from white students in school settings.

Sheryl Dixon (2005) argues that inclusion is a philosophy “having to do with what it means to be human and to belong in a civilized society” (p.33). She considers inclusion not just the placement of students with disabilities into regular classrooms, but a philosophy that is “advantages to all students” (p.33). She contends, “inclusion should be a guiding philosophy that embraces all children, not just those with handicaps” (p41). All students learn from each other and having a “variety of abilities and disabilities.....allows students to experience and accept the differences and commonalities that make up out diverse society” (p.42). “Students with disabilities, especially social deficit disabilities like autism, will learn by observing and interacting with competent peers. Even students with physical disabilities may be motivated by their abled peers” (Dixon, 2005, p.44).

In particular, articles written in the late sixties and early seventies by Eveln Deno and Lloyd Dunn were very influential in support for full inclusion. Deno (1970) asked, “Does special education need to exist at all as a separate administrative system? Further,
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if it needs to exist now because of conditions that prevailed in education in the past and may still exist at this time, should special education assume it must always exist as a separate delivery system? … Might not special education be in a healthier state if it assumed that its ultimate objective is to work itself out of business as a social institution, to turn over to the regular education mainstream whatever helpful technology it develops so that the handicapped children can be a part of that mainstream? Wouldn’t it be remarkable if special education could be a profession not afraid to change and not afraid that its role and livelihood were threatened as the ability of others to deal with individual differences expands?” (p.233)

Dunn’s (1968) research relied on efficacy studies comparing students with disabilities educated in regular classes versus special classes. Dunn concluded “pupils make as much progress in the regular grades as they do in special education” (p.8).

Some advocates liken inclusion to democratic philosophy. Skrtic, Sailor & Gee (1996), write, “A successful inclusive learning community fosters collaboration, problem-solving, self-directed learning, and critical discourse. It also allows students with extraordinary gifts and talents to move at their natural learning rate, students who progress slower than the average to move at the best of their ability (gaining learning strategies as well as remaining part of the exciting content of the themes and lessons), and students with specific learning challenges to receive creative and effective supports to maximize their success. A successful inclusive learning community is a successful democratic school” (p.150).

Mara Sapon-Shevin (2007) writes that it is the responsibility of the classroom to adapt to the child with learning disabilities not the child having to adapt to the classroom.
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“Rather than saying, 'This is my classroom-let’s see if you can fit in,' inclusion asks teachers to think about all aspects of their classroom-pedagogy, curriculum, and classroom climate-in order to make the environment educative and welcoming for all students” (p.9). She states that for inclusion to work, major restructuring of our current system of education is needed. Her early experience as a special education teacher brought about the realization of how disconnected regular and special education teachers are even in the same school.

Lorna Idol (2006) researched the degree of inclusion in four secondary schools. By conducting personal interviews, Idol examined the perceptions of staff members towards inclusion and collaboration among teachers. Her results indicate that there was a trend moving toward inclusion. “Few teachers chose self-contained, special education classes as the preferred choice for service delivery” (p.90). However, teachers were not willing to include students with behavioral problems who disrupted the class.

The Illusion of Full Inclusion

In their book The Illusion of Full Inclusion, Kauffman and Hallahan (1995) critique the writings of researchers who have advocated for full inclusion. They compare it to riding the bandwagon of special education and they are leery that “special education is in danger of riding the bandwagon called full inclusion to its own funeral” (p. ix).

Kauffman (1993) believed that special education faces two “immediate, critical, and inter-related tasks in responding to current proposals for reform: keeping the issue of place of education in proper perspective and choosing idea over image” (p.9). Kauffman states, “Physical place has been the hub of controversy because it clearly defines proximity to age peers with certain characteristics. A student’s being in the same
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location as others has been assumed to be a necessary if not sufficient condition for receiving equal educational opportunity” (p.11). Kauffman argues that “neither the history of special education nor reviews of the effects of placement suggest that the location of supports is the key to improvement of special education outcomes. Furthermore, recent empirical evidence does not indicate that we currently have effective and reliable strategies for improving and sustaining outcomes for all students in regular classrooms. Studies of the social status of children with disabilities do not show that the stigma and isolation they feel is necessarily a result of their being taught outside the regular classroom” (p.12).

Kauffman’s (1993) comment of choosing idea over image relate to his belief that much of the current reform rhetoric is focused on “simplisms intended to convey appealing images, rather than a complex and compelling set of ideas (p.13). He states that national education goals drafted by the government are “misleading and jingoistic, designed to address issues that appeal to suspicions and fears rather than real problems and focused on America’s being first in international competition (p.13). For example, the National Education Goal 6 - the literacy and lifelong learning goal states that: “By the year 2000 every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship” reflects simplistic conceptualizations and images that ignore the capacities and needs of many students” (p.14).

Bernard Rimland (1993) wrote, “If a child can be effectively included, he probably should be” (p.289). However, having an son with autism, he said, “If your child functions far below the normal child intellectually, academically, and socially, does it
make sense to insist that he or she be “included” in a regular classroom?” (p.289) He found that special schools were “under heavy attack” by people supporting full inclusion. He felt that full inclusion meant, “abolishing the special education provisions that are vitally important to autistic children” (p.290). Rimland strongly disagrees with the views of Douglas Biklen in his book *Achieving the Complete School*. Biklen believes that full inclusion should be the only choice because it is the right choice, the moral choice. Biklen makes an analogy with slavery. Slavery, he said, “was abolished because it was morally wrong, not because it didn’t work” (as cited in Rimland, 1993, p.290). Rimland disagrees. He states that “Biklen has the slavery analogy backward: making full inclusion the only option does not resemble the abolition of slavery, but instead the imposition of slavery. Like slavery, full inclusion rejects the idea that people should be free to choose for themselves the options they desire, and compels them to accede to the wishes of others.” Rimland also comments on the writings of special education consultant Laurence Lieberman. According to Rimland (1993), Lieberman is one of the few educators “with the courage to speak out and tell the compulsory full inclusionists that they are wrong.” Lieberman wrote, “People involved in education cannot agree on school choice, on promotion policies, on achievement testing, on curricula, teaching approaches, or the distribution of condoms. But all the state boards of education can agree on full inclusion for all disabled students?” (p.292) Furthermore, Lieberman stated “Any organization that endorses full inclusion is taking an extremist position that has no place in an educational system and a society that prides itself on its choices and multiple ways to achieve a desired quality of life” (p.292).
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Sindelar, Shearer. Yendol-Hoppey & Liebert (2006) researched the sustainability of inclusive school reform. For four years, the researchers studied a middle school in a south Florida district. Their findings reveal that inclusion was not sustained. The reasons why include leadership change, teacher turnover and state and district assessment policy change. During the four-year study, the principals changed twice. The first principal was “committed to her predecessor’s reform agenda and was successful at keeping teachers working towards the inclusive vision” (p. 320). The second principal “seemed more committed to recent district initiatives related to student assessments and school grades” (p. 320).

The second reason had to do with a high rate of teacher transfers. Each new principal brought in new teachers. When the second principal was hired, “teachers were hired with less attention paid to their knowledge of inclusion and their commitment to the co-teaching model” (p. 321).

The third reason dealt with change in state and district policy. Florida initiated a program of high stakes assessments and accountability in which schools were graded. This was before the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001.

Barbara Bateman (1994) writes of the tension between regular education and special education. She notes, “regular education by its very essence deals with norms, averages, and groups, while special education focuses on individuals” (p. 512). Bateman believes that special education is “both a service to children with disabilities and a safety net to some of the regular education fallout, by whatever changing name, and regardless of whether it is the best system” (p. 520). The inability of regular education to individualize is often highlighted in the discipline of special education students. Bateman
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states “only the rare regular education administrator understands either the educational or legal necessity for individualized disciplinary procedures and consequences for students whose disabilities cause their misconduct” (p. 521).

Kaufmann (1993) calls for three long-term strategies for achieving substantive reform in special education. His first strategy deals with the separation of special education populations. Kaufmann believes that the disaggregation of students is “necessary to ensure the appropriateness of education for all” (p. 17). Kaufmann states “What has been lost is the memory that special education was created to help schools serve all children better – to help teachers deal with the diversity of students. The problems that brought special education into being remain features of general education, and merging special education into general education will not alter those realities” (p. 17). Kaufmann disagrees with the premise of educating “all students” in general settings. If diversity among students is something to be celebrated, then “diversity of services, programs, and environments providing appropriate education and habilitation should also prompt celebration” (p. 17).

Kaufmann’s (1993) second strategy deals with a total retooling of the conceptual foundations of special education. “If special education is criticized because it does not work yet most agree that special education works in some ways, what can be done to allow a clearer definition of “what works” means?” (p. 19) According to Kaufmann, the conceptual foundations of special education have been strengthened by “the explanation of how to write legally correct and educationally useful IEPs, the development of an empirically derived theory of instruction, and a treatise on the ethics of special
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education "(p.19). Carefully honed and consistent statements about its meaning and practice can further special educations reform.

Kaufmann’s (1993) third strategy deals with strengthening special education’s empirical base. Reliable research data, both quantitative and qualitative, is needed to judge whether special education is working and achieving its desired results.

According to Bullock and Gable (2006), students with emotional and behavioral disorders may have the most difficult time in inclusive classrooms. Several factors may be attributed to this difficulty. Many students with emotional and behavioral disorders exhibit externalizing behavior problems including acting out and aggressiveness. Others exhibit internalizing behaviors ranging from distractibility, socially withdrawn, fearfulness, non-compliance, unmotivated and disinterest in school. These behaviors are considered unacceptable in many general education classrooms.

Research of a Segregated School Setting

Participants of this research paper are administration members, teachers, parents and students of a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) program. BOCES was created by the New York State legislature in 1948 to “provide shared educational programs and services to school districts” (http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/mgtserv/BOCES/APrimerAboutBOCES.htm). One specific program is designed for high school students working towards their diploma. Instruction is aligned with the New York State Standards and each student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This program is considered a segregated setting. All of the
approximately 150 students have classified disabilities and are in 6:1:1 or 8:1:1 classrooms.

**Method**

This researcher used a questionnaire survey to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of a segregated school setting. Participants were emailed a questionnaire survey using Survey Monkey, an online software tool. The setting of the research was confined to a segregated high school program within a BOCES organization in Rochester, New York.

**Participants**

The original number of emails distributed to participants included 19 special education teachers, 5 administrators, 5 mental health personnel, 8 parents/guardians, and 10 former students of the program.

**Results –**

**Administration Responses**

Of the 5 administrators surveyed, 3 replied. Results were the following:

**Question 1: Are segregated schools the fall back choice when nothing else is working?**

*Participant 1:* Yes

*Participant 2:* No, I don’t believe so – I think some people choose center based schools.
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Participant 3: First I think the term segregated schools is a negative way to describe a center based program. If a district has tried all their options to service a student within their district and the needs are still not being met then they have the obligation to look elsewhere.

Question 2: Why are students referred to a segregated school?

Participant 1: Because of excessive disruption to other students, greater need than can be provided in current setting, and student requires a smaller more therapeutic setting.

Participant 2: Some for behavior, some for specialized needs that can not be met in a regular setting.

Participant 3: Because their needs are not being met in the complex settings of a district’s elementary, middle school or high school building. Also, they are disrupting the education of students who do not have high management needs. They are taking time from students who do not have a 504 plan or an IEP. If you talk frankly with a regular education student they just “roll their eyes” at students who constantly disrupt their classes.

Question 3: What are the benefits of segregated programs compared to an inclusive educational setting?

Participant 1: Smaller, more therapeutic, staff trained in more specific areas of need.

Participant 2: Students do not feel like outcasts – some kids have commonalities. More specialized education to meet individual needs.

Participant 3: The student can be in a program where one can finally not feel as though he/she is “singled” out by consistently being suspended, refusing to attend school, or
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having a 1 to 1. They can be in a place that addresses social-emotional needs as well as educational needs.

**Question 4: What types of student disabilities are best served in a segregated school and why?**

*Participant 1:* Students with behavioral issues or emotional issues. These tend to be the most disruptive or insubordinate and can exhaust the great majority of staff time, leaving little for majority of students. They also tend to be misfits. Behaviors stem from others’ beliefs about them or their own perceived beliefs of how others see them and the cycle escalates.

*Participant 2:* Multiply handicapped – meets all needs – feeding, appropriate educational goals – does not distract regular education. Emotional and behavioral disabilities – these kids can’t handle daily pressures – don’t want to take away from regular learning.

*Participant 3:* Students who have emotional and educational needs because of the flexibility, students are not tied into one code of conduct.

**Question 5: What types of services can segregated schools offer that can not be offered through inclusive educational settings?**

*Participant 1:* I think most can be offered in inclusive settings but may not be as effective (i.e.: a counselor with 400 student assignments vs. a counselor with 25 student assignments)

*Participant 2:* More flexibility in program-more individualized. Culture may be more of a safe place to have behavior difficulties.
Participant 3: Alternatives to suspensions, more mental health counseling, consults with developmental pediatrician and psychiatrists, on site routinely with the possibility of some medication being prescribed.

**Question 6: What do special education teachers in a segregated school offer that is different from a special education teacher in an inclusive setting?**

*Participant 1:* More experience with the specific needs of a particularly needy/difficult population.

*Participant 2:* They tend to have a different mindset. Instead of having the NCLB goals of needing to pass the exams, they may need to support the student better.

*Participant 3:* They have the immediate support of mental health staff and administrators.

**Mental Health Personnel Responses**

Of the 5 Mental Health Personnel surveyed, 2 replied. Results were the following:

**Question 1: Are segregated schools the fall back choice when nothing else is working?**

*Participant 1:* Yes, all school districts that I know of try every means at the districts disposal before using an alternative setting. The money it costs to send students out of district and the parent's resistance to this type of choice gives segregated schools the fall back designation.

*Participant 2:* While most students are best served by an inclusive model, a small proportion of special needs students cannot be provided an appropriate program in
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Participant 1: Any type of disability can be served. It is the severity of the disability in comparison to the general population and the individual student’s feelings and reactions to other students within a general population. The lack of this emotional reaction may help a student attend to their education without social stigmas.

Participant 2: Students with specific environmental needs, i.e. students with severe behavioral needs, students with PTSD symptoms that interfere with functioning in crowded settings, or students with anxiety disorders who need a sheltered environment. Or, students with uncommon severe disorders for which a high level of staff experience and expertise is needed, i.e. students with severe multiple disabilities, students with psychotic disorders, students with severe tourettes/ocd.

Question 5: What types of services can segregated schools offer that can not be offered through inclusive educational settings?

Participant 1: Personal attention and flexibility. Not really a service, but I think each setting is able to supply all the required services needed.

Participant 2: Segregated schools can offer environmental adaptations that are not possible in general education: a quieter, more sheltered setting or a very structured setting with many behavioral supports. They can also allow for a more highly experienced staff and greater staff support overall.

Question 6: What do special education teachers in a segregated school offer that is different from a special education teacher in an inclusive setting?

Participant 1: A different perspective and focus on the underlying difficulties their students encounter on a daily basis.
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Participant 2: In a segregated school, teachers are in a position to implement specific environmental changes that would be difficult or impossible in general education. They are also in a position to develop expertise about less common challenges some students face, and the setting provides them with much more support in their teaming relationships with support staff like Speech, OT, PT, Psychology, and Social Work.

Special Education Teacher Responses

Of the 19 Special Education Teachers surveyed, 15 relied. Results are the following:

Question 1: Are segregated schools the fall back choice when nothing else is working?

Participant 1: Often times, this is what happens. However, when someone is truly looking for an alternative for their child’s special needs, they consider a segregated education setting as the setting that best meets their child’s needs.

Participant 2: No

Participant 3: In some situations I feel that yes nothing is working and the segregated school becomes something of a dumping ground for students with disabilities. If the student is willing to try the segregated school, it can really be a benefit because the student is willing to accept the help and support it offers.

Participant 4: They must be. Students are entitled to a free and appropriate education. If an inclusion based program is not working, it is obviously not appropriate.

Participant 5: No. They are when the student needs more intensive support/services than the general education environment can offer.
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Participant 6: If that is the next step along the spectrum of least restrictive environments and is an appropriate placement for the student.

Participant 7: No, segregated schools have their place in the realm of educational opportunities provided to students with special needs, especially those in a state of emotional disturbance.

Participant 8: No, segregation is sometimes necessary to address the issues for a student and to provide an environment conducive to learning.

Participant 9: Yes, I believe so. Inclusion is a wonderful idea and it should be tried, but many times it does not work. As great as inclusion is, students that need constant attention, do not get it in inclusion programs. Furthermore, many inclusion environments provide the problems for students. Segregated schools support all the needs of their students to some extent.

Participant 10: I believe so. However, I think that segregated schools are necessary. So many of our students have been successful in the alternative education setting who were not successful in their home school.

Participant 11: No, segregated schools may just be the best choice for a student’s particular needs.

Participant 12: Sometimes, and other times they are dumping grounds.

Participant 13: Yes

Participant 14: Yes. Students are placed in alternative setting when they pose a threat to other students/school staff and require close supervision, small class size, etc. Students (such as those with severe Tourettes) are also placed out of their home school when their behaviors are so disruptive that they infringe on the education of others.
Participant 15: Yes

Question 2: Why are students referred to a segregated school?

Participant 1: In many cases, this is the last choice for these students due to failure in other special education settings. Sometimes a parent or district representative might see certain segregated education settings as the only option that might meet their child’s special needs.

Participant 2: To experience a more supportive academic environment.

Participant 3: I believe they are recommended to a segregated school because the class size is smaller. It is usually 8:1:1 and district based classrooms are usually 12:1:1.

Participant 4: In my experience, students are referred to segregated classes because they were not successful behaviorally or academically in the regular education environment. Often, those students are receiving copious supports however, they remain unsuccessful in the regular education setting.

Participant 5: They are referred because their disabilities/disorders require they recieve more support, services and 1:1 assistance.

Participant 6: The district classrooms are unable to serve the students with the services they require.

Participant 7: Their needs cannot be met by their district’s home school.

Participant 8: Often behavior issues or the student has been unsuccessful and it is an attempt to help them have a new start where they can be successful.

Participant 9: Because they cannot succeed in a “regular” school or inclusion program.

Participant 10: Many reasons. Most often behavioral or emotional.
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Participant 11: Because the student can not get their needs met in a “general” educational environment.

Participant 12: Too much pathology for mainstream – need for specialized services, equipment.

Participant 13: The home district can not meet the emotional, social and/or academic needs of the student.

Participant 14: When other strategies have been tried and have not been successful or the student’s anxiety or depression becomes so overwhelming that a hospitalization is required.

Participant 15: To give them a chance to become successful in a high school setting.

Question 3: What are the benefits of segregated programs compared to an inclusive educational setting?

Participant 1: There is a lot more flexibility with all aspects of the program. There is not the academic pressure that is seen in traditional education settings. Usually there is little or no homework. Students can move around more freely within the confines of the environment. Students’ special needs are taken into account with every aspect of the program. The classes are smaller and more individual attention can be given to the students. The staff, as a whole, is more educated about the special needs of the students and thus they are more empathetic to the special needs of the population they are serving.

Participant 2: More supports, structure, individual attention, specialized instruction.

Participant 3: The student’s problems are dealt with more directly and because it is an exclusive special education setting, the students have a better chance of getting the individual help that they need.
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**Participant 4:** Smaller class size and ability to be immensely flexible given any situation. Furthermore, a segregated setting often offers increased availability of mental health support.

**Participant 5:** Segregated programs provide 1:1 assistance. They are more flexible with learning styles/approaches. They are accommodating when a student is not doing well emotionally. The students are extremely supportive of each other.

**Participant 6:** It allows classrooms to be setup to accommodate students with disabilities with easily accessible services and/or technology instead of worrying about transportation. Students are less likely to feel singled out in a classroom if they are receiving some of the same kind of services as other students around them.

**Participant 7:** I feel the biggest advantage is the overall size of the program and the individual class sizes that are available.

**Participant 8:** It provides an environment where the issues can be addressed and the attention given to the student to help them achieve success.

**Participant 9:** It provides constant 1:1 assistance, provides continuous mental health counseling, pays particular attention to social skills, makes all students feel welcomed, and does not pressure the students academically.

**Participant 10:** The benefits of a segregated program are smaller class sizes, more 1:1 help, modified curriculum and assignments, mental health services, as well as outside provider’s services.

**Participant 11:** Teacher/student ratio

**Participant 12:** Staff can be more informed about student’s needs.

**Participant 13:** More individualized academic support.
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Participant 14: Segregated programs allow fragile students to receive intensive counseling; 1:1 or small group instruction from teachers. It also allows those students who have a tendency to become “invisible” a chance to learn and have their needs met. Most of the time, these students are able to find friends, and be more accepted in a segregated program, where they may have had no connections or have been shunned by students in their home school because of their differences. Most students in segregated school programs are sensitive to the differences of others. And find comfort in knowing that they are not alone (similar to the way a support group is helpful to those seeking help). I have a senior student that came to our program this year, who because of her extreme shyness has not had one friend in the past 3 years of high school. She now has a whole group of friends who have welcomed her and accept her for who she is. She even gets together with them outside of school, on the weekends.

Participant 15: Small classrooms, flexible settings, and 1:1 emotional support.

Question 4: What types of student disabilities are best served in a segregated school and why?

Participant 1: Students with behavioral, psychiatric and emotional issues are best served in these settings. The flexibility in the way that they can be treated on a daily basis is at a higher level than in a traditional setting.

Participant 2: Bi-polar, ED, all psychiatric diagnosis, autism...

Participant 3: High anxiety, depression, bi polar, aspergers/autism

Participant 4: Severe psychological and behavioral disabilities. These students have a history of symptoms that are often severe. Education professionals specifically trained in these areas can teach regular educational academics in an adapted format to best fit the
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needs of students who require outside of the classroom supports, hospitalization, or adapted days.

Participant 5: OCD, Autism, Borderline Personality Disorder, Attachment Disorder, Bi-Polar, Paranoia, Emotionally Disturbed.

Participant 6: Depending on the severity, all of them could best be served in a segregated school because they are more suitable to handle the more severe situations. Less severe cases might not be good situations for students to be in a segregated school.

Participant 7: Students in a state of Emotional Disturbance as well as OCD, Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant.

Participant 8: I think any disability can be better addressed in this environment. The students are in a class where it can be geared to their specific needs, where often in a regular class they can get lost.

Participant 9: Emotional Disturbance – many of these students are not accepted in inclusive settings. In a segregated school they find kids that are just like them, helping them fit in. Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder – Staff in segregated schools are more equipped to work with these students and not get in power struggles with them. Furthermore, they do not take things said or done by the students personal. These students begin to see people out there will be tolerant of them.

Participant 10: Not sure. I work with oppositional defiant kids. Most of our kids are able to adapt and do well in the structure that the alternative high school sets for them.

Participant 11: Emotional/behavioral disorders. This is because the educators in segregated schools are better prepared to help students.

Participant 12: Multiply handicapped, ED, school phobic, fragile, violent.
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Participant 13: ED – more support.

Participant 14: Our program has many students with Tourettes Syndrome, Major Depression, Bi-Polar Disorder, Autism and Psychological Disorders.

Participant 15: All types.

Question 5: What type of services can segregated schools offer that can not be offered through inclusive educational settings?

Participant 1: Usually the types of services are the same in both settings, depending on the IEP and how it is written. However, when the services are greater in the number of times they are delivered per week, it usually is indicative that the student may need an alternative educational setting for their school program.

Participant 2: Mental health easily accessed.

Participant 3: Counseling on a regular basis. More individual help academically and with support.

Participant 4: Focused case management and the ability to work one to one with the outside supports the student has to create a cohesive case management plan.

Participant 5: Animal therapy, music therapy, transition services, VESID.

Participant 6: I think it has more to do with the ability to offer a more flexible program with tolerance to different student’s situations than specific services that can be offered.

Participant 7: Daily support given by either a social worker or ideally a psychologist. Quality teacher 1:1 attention. Classroom assistance from another staff member, an aide or associate teacher. Direct, daily interaction with administrator in charge of program. Ideally, daily interaction with assigned drug counselor if needed.
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*Participant 8:* All types of services, academics can be taught geared to meet the needs of the individual. There is support and counseling available when it is needed, which allows the student to be in a supportive environment where they can learn.

*Participant 9:* Mental Health Counseling, Post Graduation Programs, Student contracts to get back in their district setting.

*Participant 10:* Outside service providers. We are constantly meeting and staffing kids trying to improve their overall quality of life. This means that if a kid needs to be involved with some sort of program outside of school to keep them off the streets then the alternative high school staff will contact the right people to get a kid a service he or she needs.

*Participant 11:* Teacher/student ratio, smaller classroom setting, modified work.

*Participant 12:* Medical, behavior modification, feelings of inclusion “I’m not the only one with this problem!”

*Participant 13:* Mental health counseling

*Participant 14:* Our program offers intense counseling for students with severe emotional disabilities. Students meet regularly with their counselor, and are also able to meet as problems arise, on an as needed basis. They are taught strategies in order to cope with their disabilities and the stress that is causes. Staff is trained to be sensitive to the needs of students. Alternative teaching methods are used to help students be successful. Students that may not ever have a chance to excel, have opportunities to take leadership roles in our program.

*Participant 15:* Calmer environment so they feel more comfortable and accepted.
Question 6: What do special education teachers in a segregated school offer that is different from a special education teacher in an inclusive setting?

Participant 1: I would assume that "flexibility" would be a key issue. They would need to realize that traditional approaches to special education have not worked and they need to be doing something different to meet the special needs of the students that they are teaching.

Participant 2: Ability to shape curriculum to ever changing student atmosphere.

Participant 3: More individual attention which means the teachers can really get to know each student that they teach.

Participant 4: We teach the kids they couldn't. The school that I work for has over 1000 students in specialized settings. Obviously, there are some kids who cannot be successful in regular education. Too often, education takes an all or nothing stance to developing research and practices. I am reminded of whole reading. Entire schools relied on such programs for five or more years, to learn their programs were unsuccessful because they were not accompanied by more traditional teaching. If we are to abandon segregated special education schools for an inclusive model, what happens to the students who cannot be successful? We must push on all the levers, not just one, and abandon all others. Its folly and it will be at the cost of children. THAT'S TOO HIGH OF A COST!!!!

Participant 5: There are fewer students in a classroom, so we can get to know each student on a more personal level. We accommodate to each individual learner's needs so they can be more successful. We try to help the student emotionally first so they can be successful academically.
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Participant 6: More flexibility, greater understanding of the disabilities.

Participant 7: Special educators in a segregated program have developed a team approach to dealing with the needs of students. Our kids are more accepted and feel much more a part of the greater whole than students who are placed in special programs in their own schools. These programs are much more often targets of “segregation” than what we see.

Participant 8: They have the ability to address the issues as they come up and provide immediate response to the needs of the students. The program can be tailored to the needs without impacting the rest of the students.

Participant 9: Segregated schools focus on certain disabilities so there is a wealth of information at all staff’s fingertips. Furthermore, I believe teachers in a segregated school setting choose to work with the students they work with, instead of a general education setting.

Participant 10: Special education teachers in a segregated school are no different than any other teacher. You teach because you love kids and want to impact their lives. It is all a matter of attitude and perspective. Give me any kid and I will work with them.

Participant 11: PATIENCE! Modified work.

Participant 12: More flexibility because they do not have to conform to traditional schools.

Participant 13: Direct academic instruction, case manager activities.

Participant 14: When you are the only special education classroom in a regular school, you are many times, looked at as different, and many times not really thought of as peers. I have worked in District Based classrooms, and it is a common practice for students (at
least at the high school level) to make every effort to enter their classroom either prior to, or after the bell has rung, so that they are not seen by other students. Special education teachers in our program are very sensitive to the needs of their students, and work in close contact with the student and their families.

Participant 15: How do we know what they offer in an inclusive setting?

Student Survey Responses

Of the 10 former students surveyed, 3 responded. Results are the following:

Question 1: What are the educational experiences of students and graduates of segregated schools in regards to teaching styles, size of class, setting and knowledge?

Participant 1: I really liked the classes and how they were set up. We didn’t have desks we had tables. It was more like family style when it came to education, and it made me feel very welcomed. The education part was ok. It really didn’t prepare me for college, since we didn’t get that much homework. But the teachers taught very well.

Participant 2: During the time I was in this program, the teaching styles differed from year to year, and teacher to teacher. The first year I was there, we had long “blocks” instead of periods and that helped me retain the information a lot better than getting my brain to understand six or seven different subjects during the day. None of the teachers ever treated me or anyone else like we were any less than the most important person in the room. That was a good feeling to be able to raise your hand and have someone help you, without making you feel like you were the “extra responsibility”.

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Participant 3: It was the only school I could have graduated from. Any other school I would have been a dropout.

Question 2: What were the personal benefits for students and graduates of segregated schools?

Participant 1: I liked how teachers were one to one. I remember having a problem, and I could take a teacher aside and just talk to them about what was going on. We usually walked around the building. I didn’t do it that often, since I really don’t like talking that much about things that go on outside of school but if I was having a horrible day, I was glad that someone could actually walk around and talk to me and listen.

Participant 2: I never, not once got made fun of at this program, even though we were all going through some bad times outside of school, or this person was just put in a group home for family issues, or that person won’t be in school for awhile, because they are in the hospital because of personal issues. Those were never reasons to make fun of another person. We laughed a lot, but not at each other’s expenses.

Participant 3: I made new friends and now I am an MCC student.

Question 3: What type of services can segregated schools offer that cannot be offered through inclusive educational settings?

Participant 1: I’m attending college right now, so there are many things that cannot be offered at my college that were offered at BOCES. College is very different. Some of my professors didn’t help me when I didn’t understand a problem. All they said was, “Go get tutoring.” I was shocked at that because it was just a simple question about a problem that I didn’t understand. At BOCES, they offered me help right away. If I
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didn’t understand something, they actually sat down (literally) and helped me with a problem that I didn’t understand.

*Participant 2:* This program actually tried. They found solutions to my educational roadblocks. Instead of labeling me as a trouble-maker like my home district did, when I didn’t show up for classes on time, they had someone walk with me, and when I needed someone to talk to, on really bad days, there was always someone there. Always! They did not give up on me.

*Participant 3:* I was able to flip out and calm down. I was accepted by my peers instead of rejected. The teachers supported the students and cared about us.

Parent/Guardian Survey Responses

Of the 8 Parent/Guardians surveyed, 6 replied. The results are the following:

**Question 1:** What are the benefits of a student being in a segregated program from a parent or guardian’s perspective?

*Participant 1:* It helps get them into a learning environment that they would not have at a regular school.

*Participant 2:* This program gives our daughter an education she can deal with in the supportive atmosphere that she requires. The teachers are educated in special education. The school is small so kids get more personalized treatment and can feel more secure. Kids are with a peer group that is more understanding and accepting than the general student population. Kids are with a peer group that is more understanding and accepting than the general population. Special education kids like my daughter learn better in a
small class setting like this BOCES program. Teaching can be tailored more to their abilities and strengths, and kids like my daughter, are not distracted by having a large number of students in the room.

Participant 3: The benefits for us have been even more than we expected. We started at this BOCES program because our child wasn’t thriving in the public school. He was bullied and an outcast. This program has changed his life. He has higher self-esteem. He went from having D’s to being an A-B student. He has a job now, which we never thought would happen and it is all because of this program. Five years ago I wouldn’t have thought he was even going to make it to college. We literally had thoughts that he would end up a drop out or in trouble. The respect that is fostered in this program has changed all of that for him.

Participant 4: There was a great deal of support offered to my daughter. Teachers and support staff are very well trained and consistent in their approach.

Participant 5: I think that there is a FAR better chance that a BOCES program will be comprised of people who are able to see the strengths of each student and the strengths of the families behind the students. It always amazes me that there are so many educated people (in school settings and elsewhere) who believe that all inappropriate behaviors from students could be “fixed” if only the parenting was better. I’ve always felt much less “judged” and more appreciated, in general, by the BOCES staff. I also feel that the students are less judged and more appreciated by staff and other students alike.

Participant 6: I am able to speak with teachers daily if need be, and teachers follow the IEP closer than other teachers in public schools. Also, children are able to participate in vocational training since college may not be a fit for them to succeed.
Question 2: What are the benefits of a segregated program compared to a general educational setting?

Participant 1: Better understanding of the students needs.

Participant 2: We had little choice but to place our child in a segregated school program. She was severely mentally ill and she was not coping with the school atmosphere and large crowds of kids. She was flunking school. She was being relentlessly teased, abused, and threatened by the general student population because of her illness and the way it made her act. One huge benefit of this BOCES program is the sheltering of my daughter from abuse by the general student population. Also, the program is much smaller, and has a more supportive and personable atmosphere. My daughter is now associating with kids who are a more appropriate peer group. She is also getting an education that is more appropriate to her learning style and ability, which compensates for her disabilities. Although I wish that my daughter could go to school like most kids, there needs to be a place for children like her who simply need a sheltered alternative, away from the general student population.

Participant 3: A general education setting is great for the average child, but it seems if the child has any special needs related to a gift or disability, they slip through the cracks in general education. Besides catering the educational content to the child, the school offers a protection to these students. Many of these students are bullied and shunned in regular school, this is not true at BOCES. We really appreciate everything the school does for our child.
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**Participant 4:** The smaller class size provided is extremely beneficial in really getting to know the student’s needs and having the “manpower” to provide practical supports for them.

**Participant 5:** For my son, the smaller student population and the consistency from year to year are huge assets. We tried “mainstreaming” in 6th grade. He was in a special education room most of the day except for gym and lunch. It was a disaster that took a lot of time and energy to recover from.

**Participant 6:** Smaller classrooms, more individual attention, take course work at a slower pace, follow and understand what an IEP is, able to interact with kids who have behavioral and emotional issues.

**Discussion**

There are many commonalities expressed among all of the groups surveyed. Discussion of administration responses will be addressed first. Administrators were split in their responses to question 1 regarding segregated schools being the fall back choice. One administrative participant even commented on the term “segregated” and the negative connotation that is often associated with that term. Administrative responses to why students are referred to segregated schools were similar among the participants. Each mentioned the disruption to other students in the classroom and that the needs of students with disabilities were not being met in the general education setting. Responses to the benefits of a segregated setting included the smaller classroom sizes and that students do not feel “singled out” or as an “outcast” in a segregated setting. Responses to what types of disabilities are best served in a segregated school were unanimous. All the participants mentioned emotional and behavioral disabilities. Comments on the types of
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services that are offered in segregated settings included flexibility, individualization of student's needs, and access to mental health counseling. Lastly, administrators found that special education teachers had more experience with the needs of their student population and had a different mindset regarding teaching. One administrator mentioned that teachers support the student first before worrying about the student passing their exams.

Mental health personnel responded to question 1 similarly. Both responded that inclusion should be tried first before an alternative setting is used and that this setting should not be considered a fall back choice but rather the most appropriate choice. In response to why students are referred to a segregated school, both responded that the needs of the student are not being met in their home district. Benefits to segregated programs included the personalized individual attention that can be offered. In response to what types of disabilities are best served, both mental health personnel commented that any type of disability could be served. In regards to the types of services offered, mental health personnel mentioned flexibility, quiet, more sheltered environment and personal attention. Mental health staff remarked that special education teachers have an expertise in disabilities and utilize support staff personnel (i.e. speech, OT).

Special education teacher's responses to segregated schools being the fall back choice shared common themes. Most commented that the needs of the student were not being met in their home district. One participant commented that inclusion was a wonderful idea but that inclusion environments often provide the problems for the student with special needs. Comments regarding why students are referred to a segregated school were similar to the responses to question 1. The majority of teachers mentioned that the student's particular needs were not being met in their home school. Teacher responses to
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the benefits of segregated programs included smaller classroom size, individual attention, flexibility, more supports, structure and specialized instruction. Comments also consisted of immediate counseling, and students feeling as if they belong to the school. Teacher responses to the types of disabilities best served in a segregated program included all types. Most often cited were behavioral, emotional, autism, anxiety, depression, bi-polar, and OCD. Responses to the type of services segregated schools offer, most teachers cited the access to mental health counseling. Lastly, most special educators responded that the main difference between special and general education teaching is the individual attention they are able to give students due to the smaller class size.

When asked about their experience in a segregated program, former students responded about their feelings of being welcomed. One student commented that they didn’t feel like they were an extra responsibility to the teacher. However, one student did not feel prepared for college because of the lack of homework in the program. Student responses regarding personal benefits included the 1 to 1 attention they received, not being made fun of, and making new friends. Lastly, student comments on the services segregated schools provided included the support they received. Each student mentioned the individual help they received either academically or when they were in crisis.

Asked about the benefits of a segregated program from a parent’s perspective, participants mentioned the support their child received from the staff, peer groups that were more understanding of disabilities and smaller class size. One participant stated that many people feel a child’s inappropriate behavior is due to bad parenting and they felt “less judged” and more appreciated as an advocate for their child in this program. In response to the benefits of a segregated program compared to a general education
program, one participant spoke of the relentless teasing and bullying her son had encountered in his home school. Another parent mentioned that their child was teased, abused and threatened by the general student population due to their illness.

Conclusion

This researcher found parent responses the most poignant. While inclusion is great if it is viable, there should always be an alternative option for a child who is not succeeding in general education. General education, by its very nature, is a group dynamic. Special education is a more individualized approach to the specific learning needs of a child with disabilities. While much of the current research has suggested that inclusion is where all children belong, the participants in this research have clearly stated that some students cannot thrive in general education. We cannot neatly group all children into one category. While segregated schools may be one of the last alternatives for a child, this researcher feels that we must keep options open for children with disabilities and segregated schools are one of those options.
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References


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