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Abstract

This is a collection of short papers on different ways to achieve inclusion in several aspects of life. Project WRAP involves wrapping supports and normalised services around students and families e.g. a buddy program. Another short article argues for inclusion to happen at the beginning of schooling in kindergarten. Another article describes an inclusive summer school and the fourth article describes co-teaching i.e. the teaming up of a "regular" and special education teacher to teach an integrated group of students. There is also an article on program to facilitate inclusion at work provided. **Keyword: Inclusion**

Making a Difference with...

"My son faced long-term residential placement following two years of psychiatric hospitalization. Now I watch him from my door as he boards a bus every morning for a day school. We are now working on plans to integrate him into our neighborhood school."

"My twelve-year-old son has been in three psychiatric hospitals and was being considered for residential placement. Now he's back home. Though we still have a lot of work ahead of us, just knowing he is safely sleeping in his own bed every night is the most important measure of success."

These and other families have become involved in Project WRAP, an innovative program for children with emotional and behavioral disabilities and their families.

Project WRAP was initiated through a United States Department of Education grant awarded to LADSE. One of eleven grants awarded throughout the United States, Project WRAP is a systems planning grant with the goal of designing an interagency system of support for students with emotional difficulties and their families. Project WRAP involves wrapping supports and normalized services around students and families in normal school, home and community settings.

Through this project, home and school based wrap-around services were initially developed for fifteen students and their families. These students had been identified as at risk for more restrictive school and residential placement. The WRAP experiences have led to the development of a model for an integrated system of education and mental health services in LADSE communities. This has resulted in support options which are better coordinated and more acceptable to families and students.

In addition to creating a variety of non-categorical services for children and families, an interagency training network was started. This brought educators and mental health professionals together to learn how the wrap-around approach can effectively keep families together and children included in schools. Peer support models in schools and the community were initiated. A parent network focusing on support, advocacy, training and resource development has begun. Promising results with this project have inspired community agencies and parents to pursue the creation of innovative wrap-around options which can be blended into the existing network of services and programs.

How Wrap Around Works

The goal of Project WRAP is to keep children in school and in the community, and to keep families together. This requires going further than the categorical mental health and special education services that have traditionally been offered. Parents are asked, "What do you need to help you meet the needs of your child and family?" Mental health and other service providers are asked to make

unconditional commitments to children and families. They are asked to view failures as a system problem that requires a new plan rather than viewing the child/family as "at fault" or "dysfunctional" and ejecting them from services. In some cases, achieving results requires converting residential placement

funds from the Department of Mental Health into in-home respite and behavior management services. For others, it involves parenting classes, recruiting a buddy for a child who never had a friend, pairing a parent with another parent who understands the feelings of isolation from friends and chronic frustration from caring for a troubled child. Planning focuses on more responsive instead of more restrictive options.

*"Living well together
is the best revenge
for the past"*

Burton Blatt

Project WRAP

WRAP Initiatives

....The Illinois Federation of Families
Parents who participated in Project Wrap have created a parent network to advocate for more family-friendly services. This group became the founding chapter of the Illinois Federation of Families (IFF), an affiliate of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. Expansion of the Federation of Families throughout Illinois is currently underway with support from the Illinois Department of Mental Health.

....Parent Partners

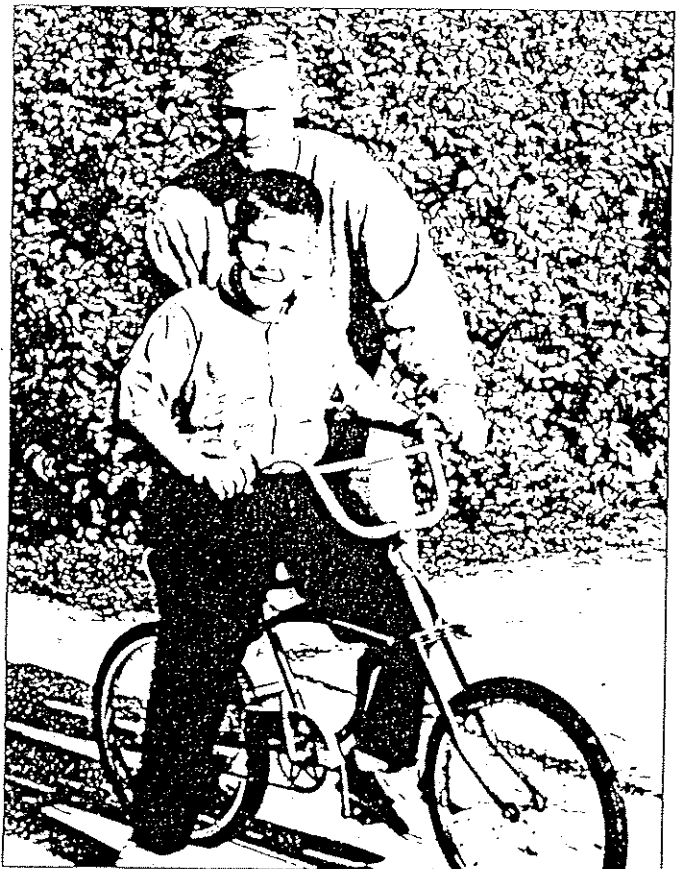
This support network grew out of empathy and encouragement that parents offered one another sitting in each others' kitchens over coffee or on the phone. Parent to parent mentoring has provided assistance and support for parents seeking services appropriate to their needs. Parents report that the support of another parent who understands what they are feeling is often what is needed to help them get through critical times.

...The Buddy Program

Buddies are 17 to 25-year-old males recruited to be a friend and provide social and recreational opportunities for designated children. Parents report that their sons, often for the first times in their lives, have received acceptance from a peer and strive to please someone in a positive way. One student, through his buddy's coaching, is trying out for a school sport for the first time in his life. In another situation, through a buddy's influence, a 12-year-old boy who has never had a friend found two new appropriate friends. One parent commented: "The buddy has expanded my son's horizons to include the outside world. He's off the couch and learning how to ride a bike!"

The Impact of Project WRAP

Project WRAP provided the impetus for a range of activities and support options that represent impressive inroads in reshaping services for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges and their families. System changes continue to be the central focus of Project WRAP efforts. Parents, school personnel, mental health providers and student peers are working together to refocus traditional resources into more a effective and family friendly support system.



Michael and his buddy John

Making a Difference with...

Inclusion...at the beginning

An integrated kindergarten program began last year at Brook Park School in District 95 in La Grange Park. This program was the first full scale effort to completely integrate a special education early childhood education (ECE) program within a regular kindergarten class. The goal was to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, were having a successful kindergarten experience. Strategies implemented to accomplish this goal included team teaching, collaboration among related service staff and modifying instruction when necessary to meet the needs of all children. This allowed the children to demonstrate how diversity can enrich learning for everyone.

Positive comments have been expressed by parents of children with and without disabilities. Beth Weaver, ECE teacher and Carol Mach, kindergarten teacher found that the integrated kindergarten program is beneficial for all children. Students with disabilities are provided appropriate

social and language models through their daily interactions in the kindergarten class. Students without disabilities learn to accept individual differences and demonstrate a caring and helpful attitude towards all students.

A transdisciplinary team representing different disciplines blends its skills and efforts to maximize

learning for all children. This team includes the regular education teacher, ECE teacher, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, school social worker, school psychologist and teacher consultant. These professionals from different disciplines blend their skills and efforts to maximize learning for all children. Utilizing this integrated services model, the integrated kindergarten program

entered its second year this fall.

All of the children with disabilities who were part of the integrated kindergarten program are included in regular first grade classes at Brook Park this year. Not only has this kindergarten program allowed a natural progression of inclusion into first grade, but it has inspired inclusion efforts at higher grade levels as well. District 95 has employed an Inclusion Coordinator and Ms. Judy Kmak, the newly appointed principal for Brook Park, has enthusiastically extended her active support to ensure the successful expansion of integrated classrooms throughout the school.

This year additional inclusive kindergartens have been initiated by two other LADSE school districts. Field Park School in Western Springs District 101 and Lincoln School in Lyons District 103 have restructured supports to enable all kindergarten aged children to benefit from inclusion.

"The mission of any human setting should aim at steering itself toward the maximization of the unexpected"

Burton Blatt



Inclusive Education Programs

Inclusive Summer School

Until this summer, all students eligible for an extended school year were based at an on-site summer school program limited to students with disabilities. This past year, the summer school options were expanded to offer more inclusive opportunities. A new program was implemented involving participation within area park district programs in La Grange, Oak Brook, Darien and Brookfield. LADSE, area park districts and special recreation organizations worked together to develop and implement these new inclusion programs.

Parents, teachers, park staff and the students themselves have shared their positive reactions about the value of the inclusive summer school program. A common theme expressed by parents and teachers is the power of peer interaction in promoting learning and accelerating the growth of social behaviors.

Jeannette Arnold of the Brookfield Recreation Department shared that, "Including the children with special needs in our program was very successful. All children enjoyed being in an outdoor environment and were able to positively interact with each other." Another member of

the park district staff related that she enjoyed seeing, "...the smiles on children's faces as they worked together in a group."

Teacher Julie Hoenig said, "The program was an excellent experience for all the children. They worked well together and learned from each other." Another teacher, Ann Astroski, commented, "The children opened like flowers. Their verbal and social skills were profoundly influenced by their peers."

A parent wrote that she was excited as she watched her child grow in language skills and sociability. Another parent shared that her child was standing at the door every day, "...ready to go to the park."

When students attend their neighborhood park district programs, all students benefit by experiencing a sense of community participation and belonging. Students need and develop friendships which are continued in school and other neighborhood settings.

"The children opened like flowers. Their verbal and social skills were profoundly influenced by their peers"



Co-Teaching Promotes Options

Hinsdale South High School is in its second year of implementing co-teaching. This model illustrates how resources can be merged to create inclusive options for students and teachers. Co-teaching involves the teaming of a regular and special education teacher to provide instruction to an integrated group of students. Students previously separated in special education classes for instruction are now included in a regular education class team taught by both teachers. The two teachers work together in the planning and presentation of the curriculum. The advantages to all students involved in the co-teaching model became clear early in the first year of implementation. This led to the expanded use of this model for the following school year.

Previous efforts at integrated approaches at Hinsdale South involved regular education teachers providing content instruction for students in special education classes. Despite some benefits it was felt that the stigma of segregated classes and lack of integration experiences for students remained. After reviewing these concerns, the co-teaching program was developed. Ron Campbell, special education teacher, and Linda Martino, social studies teacher, volunteered to implement the model. Some of Ms. Martino's regular education students found instruction difficult and were easily distracted in class, resulting in less than optimal learning outcomes. Mr. Campbell had students in his special education class who wanted to be in the mainstream but relied on his specialized techniques to be

successful learners. Although some of the students were identified as having learning/behavioral disabilities, the instructional needs of the two groups of students were remarkably similar. They combined their classes and their expertise and found that everyone benefitted.

The teachers feel that the power of peer interaction is a contributing factor to the success of the co-teaching model. Reducing the stigma of special education classes allowed students with special needs to exceed previous learning expectations. Ms. Martino gained from the opportunity to work with a special education teacher who could assist with both curriculum and management issues. Reciprocally, Mr. Campbell benefited from collaborating with a teacher specifically trained to teach U.S. History. Both teachers reported improved levels of participation, quality of work and learning outcomes among all students. Direct feedback from parents and students was also positive. As a result, a World History class was added to the co-teaching options in the Social Studies Department.

The English Department at Hinsdale South also experienced success with co-teaching and the model was expanded at staff request. The English and Special Education departments jointly planned and developed the curriculum during the summer. Four sections of English, one at each level, are currently offered using a co-teaching model.

Recognizing the mutual benefit of co-teaching, more than ten teachers at Hinsdale South have begun participating in this model. These co-teaching options require carefully coordinated scheduling between the various departments at the high school to ensure appropriate class sizes and merging of teaching skills. This blending of students and staff resources is an example of an inclusive option that positively impacts all students and teachers involved. Co-teaching is an example of one strategy that can lead to heterogeneous instructional options for students at the high school level.



Co-teaching at Hinsdale South High School

Inclusion on the Job

The value of having a satisfying job is universally recognized. Making the transition from school to work is sometimes a challenge for students. LADSE, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Service and the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA), provides experiences for students with disabilities to enhance this transition.

In addition to the vocational programs during the school year, LADSE and JTPA sponsor an employment training program for youths with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21. For the past four summers, this program has enabled participants to learn work-related skills at various non-profit organizations. These students work in a variety of jobs, including assistants to laboratory technicians, landscaping and child care. New work sites are continually being pursued in order to provide youths with opportunities in all sectors of the work community.

Job coaches serve as liaisons between the students and their employers. At first, the coach works to acclimate the student to the work environment. Later the coach checks on progress to see if the work is too easy or too hard. If there is a problem, the coach and student work together to solve it. One student in the program shared that he was initially very nervous but soon felt comfortable and looked forward to going to work everyday.

"The work," says program coordinator Paula Miller, "often has remarkable effects. Self-confidence increases with every workday. The goal is to have the students work two or three summers and then find their own jobs in the community."

"It's hard to get the kids to take a break," said Candi Brown of Briar Place located in Indian Head Park, who has participated in the program for the last two summers. "The students are very productive and always on time." Brown added that she is considering independently employing some of the students from the program in the future.



Jeremy Valdes receives The Unique Accomplishments Award from Richard Phelan, President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners

Ruth and Charles Vihon, parents of a student in the JTPA program, expressed how pleased they were to watch their son "...learn the discipline of a work schedule, the skills of his job, and the reward of a paycheck. We have been delighted as we have observed him grow in self-confidence and demonstrate increasing competence in positive, social interactions."

Cook County awarded student Jeremy Valdes of Brookfield "The Unique Accomplishments in Work Experience Award." Jeremy worked at Briar Place and was nominated by his supervisor and co-workers for this award. Upon receiving this award, Jeremy said, "I loved where I worked, I loved my job, and I really like the people I worked with."

The most important measure of success for this job training initiative is the employment of graduates in valued community settings. Our goal is to ensure that every young adult has the support necessary to be successfully employed.

*"Things are not always
as simple as they seem—
frequently they are
much simpler"*

Malcolm Sharp