

4-1-1977

The Impact of Mainstreaming on Pre-Service Reading Education

Neila Pettit
University of Missouri-Columbia

Richard D. Robinson
University of Missouri-Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Pettit, N., & Robinson, R. D. (1977). The Impact of Mainstreaming on Pre-Service Reading Education. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 17 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol17/iss3/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

THE IMPACT OF MAINSTREAMING ON PRE-SERVICE READING EDUCATION

Neila Pettit

Richard D. Robinson

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

Mainstreaming is a complex phenomenon that reaches far beyond placing children in regular classes. Special education people are advocating a mainstreaming process as it applies to exceptional or handicapped students. But mainstreaming should be considered as a new delivery system which can be a potent vehicle to bring about major curriculum and systems changes in American education. In fact, the new delivery system encompassed in mainstreaming seems to be the tip of an iceberg that touches all aspects of the educational process.

For some people the implication of the term mainstream may be a single moving body of students following the same path in the same direction, that is, a regular education program. But the implication is wrong. In a mainstreaming program, each child moves in his individually prescribed program in a fluid adaptive environment, which is able to move with and around him without creating obstacles for him or permitting him to obstruct the flow of learning for anyone else.

Mainstreaming strives to create a management system, a learning environment, in which each child is *individually* evaluated, prescribed for and monitored in a learning program that is *his or hers alone*; the purpose of mainstreaming is not to place him in any kind of group.

Mainstreaming provides a structure in which individualized instruction can mature and be used effectively. It offers an essential management vehicle for the introduction of a variety of program components. For example: if individualized instruction is ever to become a mature reality, evaluation and measurement of procedures for individualization will have to be developed and used. Also, the advantages or disadvantages of particular instructional strategies will have to be identified so that more precise matching of learner and strategy will be possible. If a student's individualized educational plan is to pinpoint specific objectives, materials, methods, programs, reinforcers, and evaluation procedures, then many alternatives must be available for use in such a program. These alternatives must be available to both student and teacher if it is to be an individualized program. No one would deny the need to allow for individual differences in children but individual differences in teachers must also be considered. Until a teacher or school system has installed a fairly sophisticated instructional management system with materials support, record keeping, and the like, it is difficult to see how the new delivery system can work. So a

management system is essential to measure and evaluate individual interactions on a daily and continuous basis. However, the gap between the state of the art of individualizing and the adoption of individualizing procedures for the mainstreaming process is wide.

An alternate teacher education program at the University of Missouri-Columbia attempts to narrow the gap between what is known and what is done. The preparation of preservice teachers to meet this challenge necessitates reorganization of the entire teacher education program including curricula, clinical experiences and instructional methods. In fact, if teachers are to be trained to create humanistic learning environments committed to mainstreaming and meeting the individual needs of their students then they must be trained in the same type of environment.

The Humanizing, Individualizing, and Personalizing (HIP) Program was conceptualized and operationalized as a process model for preservice education which provides the *system* for individualizing, humanizing, and personalizing instruction for teacher education students. The program, in its third year, attempts to incorporate into a single program workable adaptations of the most promising new thrusts in teacher education. It incorporates philosophies and concepts from the Individually Guided Education (IGE) and the Performance Based Teacher Education (PBTE) Movements.

The professional education component of the program (approximately 48 semester hours) is offered in three sixteen semester hour blocks over a three year period (HIP Blocks I, II, and III). Each block coordinates and correlates a field experience with university classroom activities. Each student is a member of an IGE (Individually Guided Education) Learning Community in an elementary school and an IGE Learning Community at the University. Eighty freshmen and sophomore students were selected to participate in the initial project. Each year a new group of students join the Learning Community.

The HIP Learning Community (including both students and faculty) is committed to the following two process goals of IGE:

- A. A process for individualizing, personalizing, and humanizing learning by tailoring instructional approaches to individual differences rather than requiring all prospective teachers to learn in the same way and at the same pace and;
- B. A process for continuous improvement which makes it possible for prospective teachers to evaluate their own performance in a clinical context, alter their instructional procedures where indicated, and advance toward successively higher levels of effective teaching.

The accomplishment of these process goals is the responsibility of an interdisciplinary team of fourteen educators which, along with the students, form a Learning Community. For the most part, the professional training does not follow the traditional course format, but embraces the laboratory,

clinical, small group seminar approach to professional preparation. The didactic content of the academic areas of emphasis in each HIP block has been reorganized around behavioral objectives, instructional alternatives and alternative assessment procedures. In addition to the subject areas being emphasized, each block is designed to include humanizing activities, career education, drug education and the use of media.

Each student selects an advisor from within the Learning Community. The advisor is responsible for coordinating the planning of the professional education learning programs for each of his/her advisees in the manner which best accommodates the student's needs, interests, and abilities.

The students spend one third of each day in their assigned elementary school Learning Community. The one third of the day assignment is rotated each five weeks to allow the student experiences with children which are representative of the full day. When students are not on their field assignments they participate in didactic activities which are designed in 2-3 week increments and scheduled at least one week in advance. A (University) open classroom is maintained fourteen hours per day to accommodate HIP activities.

The emphasis and focus of the HIP Program is the *individual* prospective teacher education student. It meets the demands of students and practitioners for earlier and expanded field experiences where students, teachers, administrators and specialists are mainstreamed. The experiences are correlated more directly with classroom theory. It deals with the problem of drugs, sexism and racism in schools. It provides the students with an awareness of and opportunities to become involved in the humanistic and career education movements, which are essential for mainstreaming. In addition, it serves as a mechanism to bring teacher educators and practitioners together in the decision making process for the purpose of enhancing the educational experiences of all concerned: all types of children, the college students in training, the cooperating teachers and the teacher educators. It is truly a mainstreaming relationship.

Student reaction to the program has been extremely positive. Students have also indicated a strong desire for additional emphasis on the humanizing, personalizing and individualizing aspects of the program. The changes in student perceptions, students' roles as aides in schools where elementary children are mainstreamed, and students' grade point averages led to the belief that humanizing, individualizing and personalizing education is of much benefit. Mainstreaming is benefiting the elementary school child and its impact on preservice training is benefiting the teacher education student.