



## The Teacher's Role in Programs for Exceptional Children

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Every teacher of exceptional children has multiple roles of commitment, enthusiasm, innovation and awareness.

The art of teaching is intangible and difficult to evaluate, but the science of learning involves tasks which closely parallel the scientific method. The major tasks are observation, identification, experimentation, verification, and evaluation. These tasks are performed by every teacher for every child because every child is exceptional in some way and deserving of careful individual attention.

### **Commitment**

The public school teacher cannot determine that any personality is of more (or less) value than any other. Every teacher is committed to the belief that "all men are created equal." It is this very commitment that gives rise to special programs to better serve the individual child who varies widely within the matrix of equality. It is this commitment that tempers efforts of conclusion-jumpers which might distort special program results by unnecessary or harmful isolation of exceptional individuals from the

social milieu. Observation does not always lead to positive identification. Where the decision is made to isolate a child in any manner, the decision should be considered tentative. Identification does not necessitate a label. Labels are often libelous. We may be wrong. The child may change.

Teachers are committed to recognize, support, guide, and create values. The individual differences between teachers, differences in interests, attitudes, judgments, and skills entitle some to become workers in special areas which become spotlighted from time to time with publicity, but the extra glow is not an aura of extra value. Publicity is rather a reflection of immediate concern. The ordinary classroom teacher continues with equally valuable work which also deserves continuous concern. It is evident that the special problems of children would never be brought to light without the skilled, conscientious classroom teacher's awareness.

### **Enthusiasm**

The teacher committed to special education becomes enthusiastic as does anyone who has found a work

to love. Anyone who loves a work is a joy to behold and a beneficial influence upon others. It may be the uniqueness of the work that breeds enthusiasm or it may be the challenge of the difficult or the experience of success against the highest odds.

Whatever the reason for the teacher's enthusiasm, let there be enthusiasm whether the spot-light shines or not. The light we seek for the child with special problems is a special light that never dims.

### **Innovation**

Knowing how to help children with special problems or propensities always demands innovation. Often we can effect change and improvement in behavior without positive diagnosis. Experience shows every case is different. Invention for one child may never be needed again. A teacher who would be frustrated by this fact would not be happy. Yet there are many teachers who thrive on new challenges and, if the reward of a single success is enough, then the many current individual challenges will produce a number of happy teachers in special education. Innovation is the

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