5-31-1999

Collaborative teaching relationships and the inclusion of sixth grade students

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COLLABORATIVE TEACHING RELATIONSHIPS AND THE INCLUSION OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 1999

Approved by_____
Professor

Date Approved May 1999

Abstract

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Ronald L. Capasso, Ed.D.
School Administration

The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework in the sixth grade using an action research design. Based on the parameters set forth in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), the schedule to determine if a student's goals and objectives are being met is measured quarterly by report card. Ultimately, whether or not a student achieves the minimum level of proficiency as outlined in the IEP for social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts serves as the benchmark for determining whether or not the students placement is appropriate. Therefore, the strategies, materials, modifications, and evaluation criteria implemented by each subject teacher were assessed to determine whether or not student goals and objectives were being achieved. Student grades and teacher feedback served as the basis for assessment. Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved effective for 43% of the students in social studies, 67% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 47% in language arts.

Mini-Abstract

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The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework in the sixth grade using an action research design. Approximately half of the students met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level in social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Capasso for his guidance in helping me to complete this thesis. I would like to thank all my graduate professors for their time and instruction.

I would like to thank my mother for all her sacrifices and instilling in me the importance of education. Without her love and guidance, I know that I would not be where I am today or have achieved as much as I have.

I would like to thank my wife for her love, and support. I especially thank her for her patience and understanding. She is my world, and my best friend.

I would like to thank my family for their love, and support.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Page

Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

Successfully dealing with special education students has long been a challenge to principals. They must balance the requirements of special needs students, teachers, and parents with the interests of the rest of the members of the school community.

Inclusion, the current effort to include special education students with the rest of the members of the school population, presents a particular challenge. According to that approach, all students, regardless of the severity of their disabilities or their needs for related services, receive their individualized education within a regular classroom in the same school they would attend if they were not disabled, and special education support is provided in the context of the general program (Indiana Department of Education, 1993).

At first glance, inclusion may seem to be an overwhelming approach, particularly to regular classroom teachers, who, in general, view their workload as already at a barely manageable limit. However, under the press of court decisions and their emphasis on the "least restrictive environment", many schools have been motivated (or forced) to move in that direction (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997).

Prior to the decade of the 1970's, self-contained classrooms were used for children even with mild disabilities. In the 1970's several court cases steered the direction of public education toward the placement of more students with disabilities into general education settings (Data Research, 1989; Vergason & Anderegg, 1992). One

Pennsylvania case decreed that all children, no matter how retarded, were entitled to a free public education (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children, 1972). As legal suits were brought against the educational system for fair and equal treatment, Congress began to pass laws which gave children throughout the United States the rights that had been gained through these individual cases (Hart, 1981).

Finally, in 1975, P. L. 94-142 was passed which mandated that children with special education needs are to be educated in the "least restrictive environment". This law, based on the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, maintains that the worth of the individual must be protected, regardless of the presence of a disability (Glover & Gary, 1976).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of implementing inclusion, within a collaborative teaching framework, in the sixth grade in order to place students in the least restrictive environment. In implementing inclusion in the sixth grade, this intern seeks to initiate and effectively manage change as both leader and member of a leadership team and facilitate group processes in shared decision making in order to foster leadership competencies and enhance this intern's leadership development. By implementing inclusion in the sixth grade, within a collaborative teaching framework, this intern seeks to place students in the least restrictive environment in order to enhance student achievement within the organization.

Inclusion is based on the principles that all students can reach goals to succeed and learn, and disabilities may be chronic and lifelong, but early identification, appropriately developed Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and classroom modification will help a student reach his or her potential (National Education

Association, 1992).

Another force that has increased the impetus toward inclusion is the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975 (IDEA). IDEA was passed in response to federal court decisions that challenged a school's practice of either educating students in inappropriate settings or excluding students from completing school (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania, 1971). In PARC v. Pennsylvania, the court stated that among alternative programs of education and training required by the statute to be available, placement in the regular public school class is preferable to placement in a special public school class (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). One of the provisions of IDEA requires that all students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment.

Definitions

The following terms will be used:

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written plan developed at a meeting according to NJAC 6A: 14-2.3 (h) 2 which sets forth present levels of performance, measurable annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks and describes an integrated, sequential program of individually designed instructional activities and related services necessary to achieve the stated goals and objectives.

Perceptually Impaired: A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.

Annual Review: A yearly meeting in which the child study team, medical personnel, teachers, and parents reevaluate the educational needs of each classified

student. The IEP from the current year is evaluated to see if any modifications need to be made in the way educational services are currently being provided to the student.

Least Restrictive Environment: Placement of a special education student in a regular educational setting or as close as possible to a regular educational setting.

Inclusion: Placement of a special education student in a regular educational setting with special education support.

Limitations of the Study

In the 1995-96 school year, the Bridgeton Middle School in Bridgeton, New Jersey, implemented an interdisciplinary team approach to instruction in grades six through eight. In the 1997-98 school year, West Avenue Elementary School in Bridgeton, New Jersey, became the first and only school in the district to pilot an inclusion program. Inclusion at West Avenue Elementary School was implemented in one self-contained fifth grade classroom and involved two teachers and a classroom aide. Implementing the interdisciplinary team approach to instruction at the Bridgeton Middle School and implementing the inclusion program at West Avenue Elementary School have both proven to be successful (Benfer, 1998; Jacques, 1998).

As a result of this success, noting that collaborative teaching and inclusion was achieved independent of one another, the purpose of this study is to evaluate if implementing inclusion at the sixth grade level within the constructs of a collaborative teaching framework can be successfully combined. Since this study is confined to the Bridgeton Middle School, conclusions draw can only be generalized to those schools or districts which implement collaborative teaching practices. Furthermore, potential limitations to the study involve grade level, amount of collaborative planning time available and/or utilized, instructional practices used, instructional modifications

implemented, effort made by collaborative teachers to insure success, and the compatibility of teachers assigned to work together.

Setting of the Study

Historical Background: Bridgeton, New Jersey, a three hundred plus year old city, located in Cumberland County, began when Richard Hancock constructed a sawmill in 1686 which eventually grew into a colonial settlement. This settlement became an established village called "Cohansey Bridge" in 1716 when the first bridge was constructed to provide access to Trenton and Cape May. This brought about a name change and "Cohansey Bridge" became "Bridge Town". "Bridgeton" came about as the result of a bank printing error in 1816, during a time when it was cheaper to change the name of a town than to pay for reprinting stationery. By 1865, Bridgeton had become a city, and a county seat in 1926 (Your Guide to Bridgeton, p. 5).

Bridgeton's location along the Cohansey River and the rich farmlands surrounding it provided the opportunity for growth into a natural trading and agricultural center. Its fertile, high yield soil allowed for a good processing industry, a major sources of income for many years. Other industries included glass making and garment making factories (Your Guide to Bridgeton, p.5).

Economics: Over the years Bridgeton has experienced continuous financial problems characterized by high rates of unemployment and failing industry. Major economic crises include the closing of its largest employer, the Owens-Illinois glass factory and the Seabrook Farms food processing plant. Although the economic plight of Bridgeton still looks bleak, city officials are working hard to revitalize it. An industrial park which opened in 1986 is a sign of the city beginning to attract new industry (Coakley, 1995).

It is evident that Bridgeton is entering a period of economic development and expansion. A state office building and a new county jail were recently completed and will help to increase job opportunities for Bridgeton residents. Despite these economic proposals, Bridgeton still has a very high unemployment rate. Bridgeton has one of the highest tax rates in the tri-county area and very few ratables. Many families are on welfare. The fact that many of its citizens do not complete high school affects their potential to gain employment (Coakley, 1995).

The 1990 U. S. census findings indicate that the population of Bridgeton, those with and without school-aged children, cannot afford to pay its education bill. Therefore, our schools are funded by a combination of state aid, local taxes, and other revenue, such as federal aid and local district surplus. Since the city ranks near the bottom of all New Jersey districts in terms of community wealth, and because it is set in an urban area, it meets the criteria for a "special needs district" (Coakley, 1995).

Demographics: Bridgeton's population grew at a steady rate from 1870 to 1960. Then population growth patterns began to reverse (Horner, 1991). Bridgeton represents a diversified population in terms of ethnic and cultural background, occupation and income levels. The 1990 census reported a population of 18,942, an increase of only 200 since 1980.

The racial makeup of Bridgeton has changed considerably over the years due to several factors. The building of Cumberland Regional High School did much to change the racial and economical makeup of Bridgeton Public Schools. The school was completed in 1975 when several townships protested the fact that they had no board of education representation. They saw regionalizing as a way of bringing school issues closer to their local community. Those who were not in favor of dividing the district called it "white

flight", a term used when middle class and white families migrate to school districts with low minority populations outside the city limits (Coakley, 1995).

A large influx of Hispanics in recent years has also changed the racial and economic makeup of Bridgeton Public Schools. It has become the fastest growing minority group in the community, with many employed as migrant workers on local farms. Many are both economically and educationally disadvantaged (Coakley, 1995). Demographic data from the Bridgeton Public School District indicate the district's racial distribution in the schools is 58% African-American, 20% Caucasian, 21% Hispanic, and 01% American Indian and Asian (Buirch, 1998). A 1994-95 redistricting plan was completed to have population in the elementary schools more closely reflect the total population of the school district.

In districts with high minority enrollment, desegregated schooling is difficult to attain. Action to eliminate predominately African-American schools has been frowned on by some community residents. Their dissatisfaction with their children's assigned elementary school has resulted in some middle class and non-minority parents withdrawing their children from the district (Coakley, 1995).

Community and School Climate: Over the years, demographics and trends in family life have given rise to complex needs which are not easily addressed by Bridgeton Public Schools. The district serves a poor population in a very economically challenged community. Many residents live in poverty in neighborhoods with large majorities of families headed by single women, and with rates of crime, delinquency, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, high school dropout and other high indicators of social malfunction. The difficulties which many children experience at school are the result of troubled family lives, lack of parental support, a dangerous environment, and other social and

psychological factors that interfere with a child's progress in school (Coakley, 1995).

Bridgeton Public Schools are a reflection of the community which it serves. Analysis of economic, demographic and social trends clearly indicated the importance to its citizenry to increase the educational levels in all segments of its population. The quality of life for the community, the viability of the economy, and community's general well-being depend largely on how Bridgeton Public Schools respond to the challenge of the community. The social and economic composition of the student body is highly related to the district's level of student performance and achievement (Coakley, 1995).

Enormous problems are faced by many of the district's 4,015 students. The high concentration of poverty in the community has resulted in a burgeoning population of children in at-risk situations. The district reports a total of 2,548 at-risk students, 567 of whom attend Bridgeton Middle School. This total represents two-thirds of the school's population (Buirch, 1998).

In general, low income students are often faulted for behavior that is inappropriate at school, but acceptable in their homes. Many students are under stress for a variety of reasons. Some have not reached developmental levels that are socially and psychologically appropriate for their age group. Trained in pedagogy, many of their teachers are not prepared for the psychological problems presented by many low income students. Parents are often defensive or hostile when confronted by school staff about disciplinary issues. The student, in turn, acts out the tension between the home and the school (Coakley, 1995).

These conditions, along with the racial demonstrations of the 1970's have led many community residents to conclude that Bridgeton Public Schools have a bad reputation. Parents find it increasingly difficult to control their children and law

enforcement officers are often involved with school disciplinary concerns (Coakley, 1995).

Educational Attainment: The 1990 census reports indicate that Bridgeton has very few college graduates and many high school dropouts. This is substantiated by Bridgeton's population of 11,598 over the age of 25. Out of this number, 1,372 have some college experience, but do not have a degree. Those who possess an Associate's degree number 367, Bachelors degree number 267, and 295 hold advanced professional degrees. About forty percent of the residents of Bridgeton over 20 years old possess a high school diploma or equivalency (Keenan, 1995).

School District: The Bridgeton School District provides a full range of educational services from kindergarten to grade 12. The 1998-99 school year began with a total enrollment of 4,015 pupils, 338 teaching staff, and 160 support staff employees (Bowe, 1998).

The following table details the changes in total student enrollment data for Bridgeton Public Schools over the last six years (Buirch, 1998). The table shows a sharp increase in the 1998-99 school year compared to the overall decline from the 1993-94 to 1997-98 school years.

Table 1
School District Population
from 1993-94 to 1998-99

Year	Student Enrollment
1998-99	4,015
1997-98	3,583
1996-97	3,564
1995-96	3,709
1994-95	3,722
1993-94	3,852

Bridgeton has five elementary schools which enroll students from kindergarten to fifth grade. Bridgeton Middle School houses grades six to eight. Bridgeton High School houses grades nine through twelve. It also houses the Adult Community School which offers a variety of high school and equivalency diploma programs and enrichment courses. Some course offerings allow students to earn college credit. Bridgeton High School operates an Alternative School Program for the purpose of accommodating students who, because of discipline and diploma problems cannot attend regular day school. Other educational services include basic skills, gifted and talented, and a migrant program (Coakley, 1995).

Board of Education: The Bridgeton Board of Education consists of nine elected members. The Board Secretary is an appointed school employee. These individuals are responsible for making policy and appropriating funds within the district.

The quality of the school board is an important factor in determining what will be done in Bridgeton Public Schools and how it will be done. Bridgeton's Board of Education has a strong reputation for being racially divided. Typically, the same individuals with the same interests in mind vote as a block, and some are motivated by their own personal interests. The Board has often been under strong pressure from various groups and segments of the community and much of its effectiveness has depended on its ability to deal with pressure. Some people feel that many Board members seem more interested in the views of its membership than those of professional educators (Coakley, 1995). In recent years, more minorities have been elected to fill seats on the board.

Middle School: The Bridgeton Middle School now stands on the site which was once the West Jersey Academy. It was purchased by the Bridgeton Board of Education

in 1912 as a result of increased student enrollment. Following World War I, the Bridgeton Board of Education decided to construct a high school building just behind the newly renovated West Jersey Academy and both buildings were used to house high school students (Coakley, 1995).

By the late 1920's, there was a need for a school building for seventh and eighth grade students. By September 1930, a new building was constructed and ready to be occupied by the students. Both the junior high and the high school building occupied the same site. By 1957, ground breaking took place for a new high school building on land purchased from the city park. When it was completed and occupied in 1958, the old high school building became Bridgeton Junior High School, which housed grades seven through nine (Buck, Chestnut, DeLuca & Sharp, p. 21).

Due to the high number of student enrollment in grades seven through nine, Bridgeton Junior High School operated on split sessions for a number of years. By 1977, overcrowded conditions were somewhat alleviated by the regionalizing of several sending districts and the construction of the Cumberland Regional High School. This provided room at Bridgeton High School to accommodate the ninth graders. In 1980, eighth graders also moved to the high school (Coakley, 1995).

In 1980, Bridgeton voters passes a 3.9 million dollar referendum to remodel Bridgeton Junior High School and to convert it to a middle school to be occupied by grades five, six, and seven (Buck, Chestnut, DeLuca & Sharp, p. 27). The Bridgeton Middle School has the capacity for 1,239 students, 43 classrooms, 15 small group instruction rooms, one large group instruction area, three computer labs, one media center, two gymnasiums, one auditorium, one clinic area, and one cafeteria (Buck, Chestnut, DeLuca & Sharp, p. 27).

Students attending Bridgeton Middle School receive the standard core curriculum of English, Reading, Writing, Math, Social Studies, and Science. In addition, health, art, home economics, music, physical education, technical education, and computer skills are offered.

Students in need of basic skills instruction are taught in one of the three computer labs. Gifted and talented students receive instruction in the Gaining Enrichment while Maximizing Student potential (GEMS) program. Handicapped and bilingual students receive instruction from professionals in these areas. The Media Specialist teaches all students how to use the Media Center (Coakley, 1995).

In-School Suspension handles minor disciplinary problems and is staffed by a full-time, certified teacher. Student and staff scheduling and the Conflict-Resolution program for students are handled through the guidance office by two Guidance Counselors and two secretaries. A clinic with a full-time nurse handles medical emergencies, health screenings, and upon request, teaches students about health related issues. Bridgeton Middle School also house a School Based Youth Services Program, an extension of the Bridgeton Hospital System, which provides the following services: counseling, education, health care, recreation, and transportation (Coakley, 1995).

The administration of Bridgeton Middle School is carried out by one principal, one assistant principal, and three supervisors. Of this group, two are white males, and three are white females. All have earned Master's Degrees. This intern is presently employed by the district as a sixth grade mathematics teacher.

There are 40 teachers for grades six through eight and Special Education. Fourteen aides assist in Special Education classrooms and related arts subjects.

Related arts and supplemental staff include three music teachers, six gym teachers,

three art teachers, a Spanish teacher, a technical education teacher, a GEMS teacher, a keyboarding teacher, a home economics teacher, a substance awareness coordinator, a speech correction specialist, and a full-time nurse

A major restructuring of the Bridgeton Middle School program took place in the Spring of 1995. The team teaching approach was put into place at the beginning of the 1995-96 school year as Bridgeton Middle School changed into a true "middle school", with a more integrated curriculum. The staff is divided into 11 interdisciplinary instructional teams designed to offer Bridgeton Middle School students a more holistic approach to the educational process (Coakley, 1995).

When the 1998-99 school year began, Bridgeton Middle School's total enrollment was 739 students. There are 248 sixth-graders, 180 seventh-graders, 171 eighth-graders and 120 special education students. Of the total school population, 379 are male and 360 are female students (Bell, 1998; Buirch, 1998).

Many of Bridgeton Middle School's students come from low income households, as reflected in the school's free and reduced lunch program. Of the total school enrollment of 739 students, 510 receive free lunch and 89 receive reduced lunch (Earnest, 1998). The racial distribution of Bridgeton Middle School students is 440 African-American, 137 Caucasian, 158 Hispanic, 3 American Indian, and 1 Asian (Buirch, 1998).

The following table represents the percent of students scoring in Level 1 ("competence"), Level 2 ("minimal competence"), and Level 3 ("not proficient") on the eighth grade Early Warning Test compared to the state average.

Table 2
Early Warning Test Scores
from 1994-95 to 1996-97

	Reading			Mathematics			Writing		
	Lev. 1	Lev. 2	Lev. 3	Lev. 1	Lev. 2	Lev. 3	Lev. 1	Lev. 2	Lev. 3
1994-95	24%	49%	27%	2%	35%	63%	30%	33%	36%
State Avg.	54%	37%	9%	39%	42%	20%	68%	21%	12%
1995-96	45%	43%	13%	16%	48%	36%	36%	32%	33%
State Avg.	55%	37%	8%	40%	42%	18%	55%	29%	16%
1996-97	24%	56%	20%	5%	45%	50%	29%	46%	25%
State Avg.	55%	37%	8%	44%	40%	16%	59%	26%	15%

Significance

The biggest change for educators is in deciding to share the role that has been traditionally been individual: to share the goals, decisions, classroom instruction, responsibility for students, assessment of student learning, problem solving, and classroom management (Ripley, 1997). In cooperative teaching both general and special educators are simultaneously present in the general classroom, maintaining joint responsibilities for specified education instruction that is to occur within that setting (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). To overcome the inevitable fears and stresses associated with change, the educators involved must feel that they are responsible for the change and that its success or failure lied directly with them (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995).

Research findings on schools where collaborative teaching has been practiced indicate student benefits for both special education students and their typical peers. Walther-Thomas and others (1996) conducted a study of inclusion and teaming to assess collaboration between general education and special education staff. They found the following:

Improvements were attributed to more teacher time and attention, reduced pupil-teacher ratios generally, and more opportunities for individual assistance. Students with disabilities developed better self images, became less critical and more motivated, and recognized their own academic and social strengths. Their social skills improved and positive peer relationships developed. Low achieving students showed academic and social skills improvements. All students gained a greater understanding of differences and acceptance of others. All developed a stronger sense of self, a new appreciation of their own skills and accomplishments, and all learned to value themselves and others as unique individuals. Staff reported professional growth, personal support, and enhanced teaching motivation. Collaboration brought complementary professional skills to planning, preparation, and delivery of classroom instruction.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has covered the following six areas related to this study: 1) focus; 2) purpose; 3) limitations; 4) setting; 5) significance; and 6) organization.

Chapter 2 covers a review of the literature. Crowl (1996) defines "review of the literature" as "locating, evaluating and synthesizing information dealing with a given research question." This section provides important information about the research context of the study and support rationale for the importance of the study.

Chapter 3 covers the design of the study. This section addresses five areas related to the research design used for the study. The first area is a general description of the research design. Second, a description of the development and design of the research instruments actually used in the study. Third, a description of the sample and sampling technique used in the study. Fourth, a description of the data collection approach. Fifth, a description of the data analysis plan. This chapter answers the question, "What type

of evidence can be gathered to prove that the project is having an impact on a particular practice?"

Chapter 4 covers the presentation of the research findings. This section answers two major questions, "What information was found?" and "What did it mean?"

Chapter 5 covers conclusions, implications and further study. This section describes the study's major conclusions and their corresponding implications. It also highlights the conclusions and implications of the study on this intern's leadership development. Furthermore, it addresses how the organization changed as a result of the study. Finally, it addresses the need for further study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing inclusion at the sixth grade level within the constructs of a collaborative teaching framework.

Although the isolation of the teaching profession long has been recognized and has often been commented upon (Barth, 1990; Lortie, 1975), for the past three decades educators also have been intrigued with the possibilities created by two teachers' sharing one classroom (Cook and Friend, 1995). As early as the 1960s (e.g., Trump, 1966), collaboration was recommended as a strategy for reorganizing secondary schools in the United States as well as in England (Warwick, 1971). A variation of collaboration - team teaching, in which teachers share planning responsibilities for instruction while they continue to teach separately - was adopted in many open-concept schools during the 1970s (Easterby-Smith and Olive, 1984). More recently, renewed interest in collaboration has emerged as part of the middle school movement and other school reform efforts (MacIver, 1990).

As a service delivery option in special education, pairs of special educators used collaboration to share their responsibilities for students in self-contained classrooms (Garvar and Papania, 1982). Further, collaboration grew rapidly in response to factors recognized during the early days of mainstreaming, including the need for special education teachers and general education teachers to work in constructive and coordinated

ways (Bauer, 1974; Walker, 1974) and increasing expectations that students with disabilities be educated in classrooms with their non-disabled peers (Cook and Friend, 1995). By the late 1980s, collaboration was discussed most often as a means for special education teachers to meet students' needs in general education settings (Cook and Friend, 1995).

In schools that have successfully restructured to meet the needs of all students, personnel consistently identify collaborative teams and the "collaborative teaming" (Thousand, 1986) group decision-making process that they employ as keystones to their success (Stainback and Stainback, 1990; Thousand, 1990; Thousand, 1986; Thousand and Villa, 1989, 1991). Patterson, Puikey, and Parker (1986) argue that every school needs many collaborative teams to invent meaningful learning opportunities for an increasingly diverse student population and to explore the problems that traditional school structures, to date, have failed to conceptualize or adequately address.

Rationale for Collaborative Teaming

Within the school restructuring movement, collaborative teams and teaming processes have come to be viewed as vehicles for inventing the solutions that traditional bureaucratic school structures have failed to conceptualize (Villa and Thousand, 1992). Team structures bring together people of diverse backgrounds and interests so they may share knowledge and skills to generate new and novel methods for individualizing learning, without the need for the current dual systems of general and special education (Nevin, Thousand, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Villa, 1990; Skrtic, 1987; Thousand, 1990; Thousand, 1986).

Collaborative teams assist adults with their work as well as offer students a model of the type of work structure they can expect to encounter as citizens of a highly

complex and interdependent 21st century work world (Villa and Thousand, 1992). Educational futurists (Benjamin, 1989; Wiggins, 1989), therefore, recommend that schools structure multiple opportunities for students to see these skills modeled and valued by their teachers, as they operate in collaborative teams (Villa and Thousand, 1992). They also recommend that students be invited to join adults as active members of the instructional and decision-making teams of the school (Villa and Thousand, 1990).

The current initiative to empower teachers offers another rationale for collaborative teaming within schools. Schlecthty (1990) argues that teacher empowerment, through participatory decision making,

> promises to yield better decisions and results. That such a promise is not hollow is attested to by the fact that some of the greatest recoveries in American business (Xerox and Ford, for example) have been based in large part on restructuring aimed at empowering and developing all employees - from the lowest in the hierarchy to the highest.

Evidence is mounting to suggest that teacher empowerment through collaborative decision making will result in desired outcomes of school restructuring - shared ownership of problem definitions and solutions (Duke, Showers and Imber, 1980; Fullen and Pomfret, 1977), the exchange of skills (Thousand, 1986), the use of higher level thinking processes and the generation of more novel solutions (Thousand, Villa, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin, in press), attendance and participation at meetings, persistence in working on difficult tasks, and attainment of the group goal (Johnson and Johnson, 1987; Rosenholtz, Bassler and Hoover-Dempsey, 1985).

Glasser's (1985, 1986) control theory offers a final compelling rationale for collaboration and teaming among school personnel (Villa and Thousand, 1992). According to Glasser (1985, 1986), control theory proposes that people choose to do

what they do because it satisfies one or more of five basic human needs: 1) love and belonging; 2) power; 3) freedom; 4) fun; and 5) survival. Based upon interviews of members of 30 teams that regularly collaborate to plan for, evaluate, and teach heterogeneous groups of students, the authors concluded that collaborative team arrangements do help educators to meet these five basic needs (Villa and Thousand, 1990). Specifically, according to Villa and Thousand (1990), collaborative teams enhance teachers' potential for survival and power in educating a diverse student body by creating opportunities for: 1) the regular exchange of needed resources, expertise, and technical assistance; and 2) professional growth through reciprocal peer coaching. In collaborative teams, members experience a sense of belonging and freedom from isolation by having others with whom to share the responsibility for accomplishing difficult tasks. Finally, it is fun to creatively problem solve and to engage in stimulating adult dialogue and social interactions.

Collaborative Teaching

The integration and inclusion of students with diverse learning needs requires a shift in the fundamental assumptions and beliefs of teachers (Cole, 1992). Fullan (1982) states that "educational change depends on what teachers think and do." Lortie (1975) conducted a study which attempted to determine the status quo of teachers. Several key findings indicated that a) teachers work in isolation, b) teacher training does not equip teachers for classroom realities, c) teachers rely heavily on their own informal observations, d) teachers feel a sense of uncertainty regarding their performance, and e) teachers are frustrated because of "lack of time." Existing norms such as teacher isolation and the privacy of teaching can be fatal to new innovations or change efforts (Cole, 1992). Skrtic (1991) states that professional innovation is not a solitary act; it is a social

phenomenon that takes place within a reflective discourse. There must be a division of labor which breaks through the boundaries of professional specialization; one in which multidisciplinary teams build new knowledge and skills (Cole, 1992).

Bauwens (1989) described collaborative teaching as follows:

> an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a co-active and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings...specifically, in cooperative teaching both general and special education teachers are simultaneously present in the general classroom, maintaining joint responsibilities for specified education instruction that is to occur within that setting.

According to Cole (1992), a service delivery model in which the special education teacher and the general education teacher provide direct instruction to all students within a general classroom setting offers opportunities for the merger of special and general education at the most important level - the classroom. She states that a greater diversity in student populations, a call for the decrease and/or elimination of ability grouping, a greater understanding of teaching and learning, and an increase in specialized knowledge in the disciplines will make collaboration and sharing of expertise among teachers more important. According to Cole (1992), no single group of professionals will have all the expertise needed to work in traditional settings. Collaborative teaching enables professionals with diverse experiences and expectations to creatively solve mutually defined problems and deal with the numerous challenges that education in the 1990s will present (Cole, 1992). No one would argue that there will be enough work to go around; the question is one of whether or not the professionals in schools are willing to work in a collegial atmosphere where they will no longer be the sole authority (Cole, 1992).

Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) offer some specific examples of

collaborative teaching:

1. *Complementary Instruction*: In this approach, the general education teacher maintains primary responsibility for teaching the specific subject matter. The special education teacher assumes primary responsibility for student's mastery of skills such as note-taking, attending, and identifying main ideas. These units could be provided by a short introductory period at the beginning of the lesson, at appropriate points throughout the lesson, and as a review at the conclusion of the lesson. For students not in need of the complementary instruction, the general education teacher might simultaneously assign and monitor enrichment activities based on previously covered material. The two professionals will collaborate in the lesson planning and preparation, as well as the classroom management and student evaluation.

2. *Team Teaching*: In this arrangement, the special and general education teachers jointly plan and teach subject content to all students. The particular roles and responsibilities of the teachers that are pertinent to the class are defined according to the individual professional's strengths. This arrangement is especially applicable to those situations where the special educator has dual certification.

3. *Supportive Learning Activities*: In this approach, both the general and special educators develop, plan and deliver instructional content in the general education classroom. The general educator maintains primary responsibility for delivering the essential content, while the special educator is responsible for developing and implementing supplementary and supportive materials to reinforce new skills and content. Both teachers are present and collaboratively monitor both types of learning activities. This approach is different from complementary instruction in that, in complementary instruction, the general educator teacher the content, while the special

educator maintains responsibility for teaching students the survival skills necessary to acquire that content. In the supportive learning approach, the general educator introduces the academic content of a lesson, while the special educator designs supplementary activities to supplement and enrich the specific content covered by the general educator.

Benefits of Collaborative Teaching

The literature on teacher collaboration points to numerous benefits of this type of instructional model. Encouraging the collaboration of special education and general education for the purpose of improving the education of all children would "create an opportunity to bring the best of special education into the mainstream of regular education" (McLeskey, Skiba, and Wilcox, 1990). According to Cole (1992), it can be strongly argued that special education teachers have strategies which could be of great benefit to all students, not just those with labels. She states that other student benefits include a greater awareness and understanding of diversity, students with disabilities can form meaningful and mutually rewarding relationships with their non-disabled peers, and students with disabilities are exposed to a broader range of curriculum.

According to Cole (1992), collaborative teaching has many long range as well as immediate benefits for teachers. It utilizes the specific and unique skills which each professional brings to the classroom. She states that typically, general education teachers are knowledgeable about curriculum and are skilled and experienced in large group management skills. Furthermore, teachers in special education have experience in targeting areas of difficulty with respect to student learning and behavior and have the skills necessary to adapt and analyze instructional materials and strategies. Additionally, special educators have experience in developing individual programs to meet individual needs (Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend, 1989). According to Cole (1992), a teacher,

when left alone, is limited in terms of the instructional responses she/he can deliver to students in the classroom. She states that the sharing of values, expertise, strengths and resources which develops from collaborative relationship provides important professional benefits to all involved.

Johnson and Johnson (1987), in their meta-analysis of the research comparing cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts, show the following results for adults:

1. Cooperative efforts promote more positive interpersonal relationships than do competitive or individualistic efforts.

2. Cooperation promotes greater social support among adults than do competitive or individualistic efforts.

3. Cooperation among adults tends to promote higher self-esteem than does competition.

Maeroff (1988) suggests that at this level of collaboration, other relationships can evolve, such as those between teachers and universities and teachers and the business community.

According to Cole (1992), another benefit specific to the teacher of special education is that she/he becomes a part of the whole. She states that the role of the special education teacher becomes more integrated with other aspects of the school and the individual is perceived by others as a member of the specific faculty and not of a separate system. In addition, the degree of labeling students and teachers is lessened. She states that the type of teaching arrangement may help prevent stress and burnout which can result from working in segregated and isolated environments. Initial data suggest that working within an integrated setting wherein general education skills and knowledge can be use may enhance job satisfaction and stability (Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend, 1989).

Over time, working in the same classroom with a colleague affords additional professional growth opportunities with respect to instructional strategies, teaching styles, and classroom management techniques (Cole, 1992). According to Cole (1992), all of these have concrete implications for instruction.

Teachers begin to believe that learning is possible for all students and that they indeed have access to the knowledge and skills necessary to teach all students (Cole, 1992). According to Lortie (1975), "the teacher's craft...is marked by the absence of concrete models for emulation." He further states that "the lack of a technical culture, an analytical orientation and a serious sharing and reflection among teachers creates ambiguity and ad hoc-ness." According to Cole (1992), these norms can be changed through collaborative relationships.

Potential Barriers to Collaborative Teaching

While new competencies, communication links and improved teaching may emerge as benefits of collaborative teaching, an inability of professionals to develop working relationships, traditional organizational structures, teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and administrative mandates can be significant barriers to successful collaboration (Cole, 1992). According to Cole (1992), it cannot be assumed that collaboration is a simple and easy technique or that teachers innately own the skills necessary for forming a collaborative relationship. Peter Senge (1991), in his book The Fifth Discipline, states:

> ...teams must learn how to tap the potential for many minds to be more intelligent than one mind. While easy to say, there are powerful forces at work in organizations that tend to make the intelligence of the team less than, not greater than, the intelligence of individual team members.

According to Cole (1992), a collaborative team of teachers requires the development of professional skills not typically associated with teaching. She states that

many teachers involved in collaboration describe the relationship like that of a marriage: the partners must continually work and redefine each other's roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, true collaboration requires a partnership in which each partner recognizes the limits of their own training and the nature of their own professional biases. Ritchie (1989), in his study of collaboration in three suburban schools, states that the pursuit of collaborative relationships is a worthwhile undertaking, yet one that is far more complex and taxing than most of the teachers had anticipated. According to Cole (1992), it turns out to be a more radical than conventional approach to school improvement, for it challenges long established and comfortable work relationships, and deep-rooted norms of independence and isolation which exist in most schools. According to Abeison and Woodman (1983), collaboration is often diminished, or not achieved at all, because of:

1. different motivations for collaborating
2. confusion regarding roles and responsibilities
3. lack of commitment and effort on the part of a team member, and
4. lack of attention to social relationships and interpersonal skills

According to Cole (1992), a second barrier to the implementation of collaboration is the traditional way in which schools are organizationally structured. She states that a lack of flexibility in the school day, the school week, and the school year prevent educators from developing structures which best meet student needs. In addition, the industrial model, where standardization and ordered scheduling prevails, can be a major barrier to successful collaboration. Gladder (1990), in her study of collaborative relationships in high schools, found seven organizational conditions that constrained collaboration:

1. the schedule
2. physical facilities
3. time
4. norms of privacy and isolation
5. teacher rewards
6. autonomy
7. staff relationships

According to Cole (1992), many of these conditions and practices are associated with the bureaucratic structure of schools. She states that they are in place to ensure the rational planning and smooth operation of education. Furthermore, secondary schools, in particular, are typically organized by discrete subject matter disciplines and the school day is broken into segments. While the organization structure may indeed facilitate order and control, it tends to isolate and compartmentalize teachers. It further encourages teachers to view themselves as specialists, with little need to mediate their relationships with other teachers.

According to Cole (1992), a third barrier deals with the attitudes and beliefs which have traditionally supported the dual systems of special and general education. Friend and Cook (1992) talk about three emergent characteristics of collaboration: trust, a sense of community, and a value for this interpersonal style. They mention these as outcomes as well as prerequisites. According to Cole (1992), they are really attitudes or beliefs which to some degree must be present at the onset if collaboration is to take place and they require some risk-taking on the part of the individual. She states that some individuals may not be as ready as others to take these risks or may not fully understand that these risks exist. Furthermore, a participant may be extremely disappointed when an

attempt to build trust is rebuffed or she/he discovers that not everyone shares a belief in collaboration to the degree she/he thought.

According to Cole (1992), this cooperation may also be difficult because of educator's attitudes and beliefs which hold that the field of special education has a unique and special expertise separate from general education. She states that if little opportunity has existed for teachers of general education and special education to interact and cooperate in other aspects of the school, it could be difficult for some to shift their attitudes and step out of traditional roles.

A final barrier to the successful implementation of collaborative teaching is administrative mandates which require teachers of special and general education to work together (Cole, 1992). According to Cole (1992), this violates the voluntariness which is necessary for collaborative relationships to develop. Friend and Bauwens (1988) state that the absence of voluntariness may contribute to resistance to change, and the sense of being coerced into a relationship will never help bring special and general educators together. According to Cole (1992), interpersonal relationships can never be ordered or mandated. She states that rather than administrative mandates, schools need administrative leadership where the culture of the school invites critical thinking, reflection and risk-taking. In addition, administrators in these schools help to set the expectations and provide the resources to make things happen.

Conclusion

According to Cole (1992), for many practitioners in inclusive schools, the challenge is how to create exemplary programs for all students. Schools that intend to move toward this goal must question the conception and design of education as a whole, and particularly the dual system of special education and regular education. She states

that the vision of a system of equity and excellence for all children drives the values and beliefs of those who are accepting the challenge of providing exemplary programs for all students. Furthermore, those who are involved are working collaboratively. The concept of collaboration is critical to the successful integration and inclusion of students who learn differently.

> By design and by talent, we were a team of specialists, and like a team of specialists in any field, our performance depended both on individual excellence and on how well we worked together. None of us had to strain to understand that we had to compliment each other's specialities; it was simply a fact, and we all tried to figure out ways to make our combination more effective.
>
> Bill Russell, Boston Celtics
> (Senge, 1990)

According to Cole (1992), teachers must work as teams, bringing skills, attitudes, competencies, and expertise to the learning environment. Ownership must be shared, and the schools must be viewed as a whole school. Collaboration is a very powerful interpersonal tool. It can change the very nature of the teaching profession and the culture of a school. According to Flannery (1991), a teacher in a high school who is involved in collaboration says it well:

> The best lesson I have learned from this experience is the value of collaboration. I am very strong in curriculum and in planning. But each of the lessons had been improved by (my co-teacher). She has contributed a lot. She makes the lessons more specific to individual needs. I have used some of (her suggestions) in my other classes as well. We are better teachers now than we were in August. It has been a real growth experience for me...just a marvelous growth experience. Getting in and doing it has really change my professional outlook.

Chapter 3

The Design of the Study

Introduction

Last year, the child study team conducted an Annual Review and developed an Individualized Education Program, or IEP, for each classified special education student. The Annual Review provided an opportunity for the child study team, medical personnel, teachers, and parents to reevaluate the educational needs of each classified student. At the Annual Review, the IEP from the current year was evaluated to see if any modifications needed to be made in the way educational services were currently being provided to the student. The goals, objectives, strategies, materials, evaluation criteria, and modifications contained within the current IEP were evaluated and modified if necessary. The IEP contains five parts: goals and objectives, strategies, materials, evaluation criteria, and modifications.

General Description

The purpose of this study was to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level using an action research design. Based on the parameters set forth in the students IEP, the schedule to determine if the student's goals and objectives were being met was measured quarterly by report card. Ultimately, whether or not the student achieved the minimum level of proficiency, as outlined in the IEP, for social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics served as the benchmark for determining whether or not the students placement was appropriate. Therefore, the strategies, materials, modifications,

and evaluation criteria implemented by each subject teacher, as outlined in the IEP, was assessed to determine whether or not implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level was achieving student goals and objectives. Student grades and teacher feedback served as the basis for assessment.

Student Identification

Based on the Annual Review for the 1997-98 school year, placement in a sixth grade regular education classroom with resource center in-class support for the 1998-99 school year met the educational needs of twenty-four classified fifth-grade students. Child study team evaluations, medical evaluation, reports from parents and teachers, classroom observations, and other data collected during the evaluative process indicated that these students were eligible for special education and/or related services according to N.J.A.C. 6:28.1.1. All twenty-four students identified were classified as perceptually impaired. Seven of the students were female and seventeen were male.

Data Collection

The 1998-99 IEPs were collected for each of the twenty-four students. The annual goals and IEP objectives for each student in social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics were noted. In addition, the strategies, materials, and evaluation criteria for each student in social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics were also noted.

Each students progress toward the attainment of their annual goals and IEP objectives for social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics was evaluated. This was accomplished by interviewing each subject teacher during the fourth and eighth week of the first and second marking period. The specific strategies, materials, and modifications each subject teacher employed for each student in order to attain their annual goals and IEP objectives were identified and recorded during these interviews. In

addition, each subject teacher completed a monthly inclusion report in which their thoughts and concerns regarding attainment of each students annual goals and IEP objectives were recorded. Lastly, the grades for each student in social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics for marking period one and marking period two were recorded.

Data Analysis Plan

As mentioned previously, based on the evaluation criteria set forth in each students IEP, the schedule to determine if the student's goals and objectives were being met was measured quarterly by report card. Therefore, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics for marking period one and marking period two were recorded. In addition, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in each subject for both marking periods were recorded. Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in each subject, the results served as a benchmark for determining whether or not implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level had proven to be effective overall.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

Introduction

Based on the evaluation criteria set forth in each students IEP, the schedule to determine if a student's goals and objectives were being met was measured quarterly by report card. Therefore, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level of grade "C" or higher, was recorded for social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics for marking period one and marking period two. The results were as follows:

Social Studies:

In marking period one, 0% of the students received A's, 19% received B's, 24% received C's, 29% received D's and 29% received F's.

In marking period two, 5% of the students received A's, 59% received B's, 27% received C's, 9% received D's and 0% received F's.

Science:

In marking period one, 19% of the students received A's, 43% received B's, 29% received C's, 10% received D's and 0% received F's.

In marking period two, 5% of the students received A's, 50% received B's, 23% received C's, 23% received D's and 0% received F's.

Mathematics:

In marking period one, 0% of the students received A's, 19% received B's, 33% received C's, 19% received D's and 29% received F's.

In marking period two, 0% of the students received A's, 32% received B's, 55% received C's, 14% received D's and 0% received F's.

Language Arts:

In marking period one, 0% of the students received A's, 19% received B's, 38% received C's, 33% received D's and 10% received F's.

In marking period two, 0% of the students received A's, 14% received B's, 45% received C's, 27% received D's and 14% received F's.

Number Meeting Proficiency Level

For marking period one, 43% of the students in social studies, 91% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 57% in language arts met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP. In addition, 57% of the students in social studies, 9% in science, 48% in mathematics, and 43% in language arts did not meet or exceed the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP.

For marking period two, 91% of the students in social studies, 78% in science, 87% in mathematics, and 59% in language arts met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP. In addition, 9% of the students in social studies, 22% in science, 13% in mathematics, and 41% in language arts did not meet or exceed the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP.

For both marking periods combined, 43% of the students in social studies, 67% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 47% in language arts met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP. In addition, 57% of the students in social studies, 33% in science, 48% in mathematics, and 53% in language arts did not meet or exceed the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP.

Comparison Between Marking Periods

Comparing the results from marking period one to marking period two, 48% more students in social studies, 35% more students in mathematics, and 2% more students in language arts met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP in marking period two compared to marking period one. However, 13% less students in science met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level set for them in their IEP in marking period two compared to marking period one.

Conclusion

Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level for marking period one, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved effective for 43% of the students in social studies, 91% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 57% in language arts.

Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level for marking period two, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved effective for 91% of the students in social studies, 78% in science, 87% in mathematics, and 59% in language arts.

Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level for both marking periods combined, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved effective for 43% of the students in social studies, 67% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 47% in language arts.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing inclusion, within a collaborative teaching framework, in the sixth grade using an action research design. Specifically, this intern wished to determine the effectiveness of implementing inclusion, within a collaborative teaching framework, in the sixth grade in order to place students in the least restrictive environment.

Major Conclusions

Based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level for both marking periods combined, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved effective for 43% of the students in social studies, 67% in science, 52% in mathematics, and 47% in language arts. The results also showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved ineffective for 57% of the students in social studies, 33% of the students in science, 48% of the students in mathematics, and 53% of the students in language arts.

Implications

For the above students who did not meet the minimum proficiency level as outlined in their current IEP, the goals, objectives, strategies, materials, evaluation criteria, and modifications contained within the current IEP will be reevaluated and modified during the next Annual Review. This reevaluation and modification will be based on child

study team evaluations, medical evaiuations, reports from parents and teachers, and classroom observations. Ultimately, whether or not the student achieves the minimum level of proficiency for each subject area will serve as the benchmark for determining whether or not the students placement is appropriate.

Leadership Development

In implementing inclusion in the sixth grade, this intern sought to initiate and effectively manage change as both a leader and as a member of a leadership team. As a result, this intern sought to facilitate group processes in shared decision making in order to foster leadership competencies and enhance leadership development. Overall, the initiation and effective management of inclusion within the sixth grade utilizing a collaborative teaching framework proved to be successful in all subjects. As a result of initiating and effectively managing change, leadership competencies have been fostered, developed, and enhanced.

Organizational Change

As a result of the study, the organization has come to realize some of the many benefits that collaborative teaching relationships provide to the inclusive student. In general, the students have developed better self-images, become less critical, more motivated, and have recognized their own academic and social strengths. The social skills of these students have improved and positive peer relationships have developed. Low achieving, non-inclusive students have shown academic and social skill improvements as well. All students involved have gained a greater understanding of differences and acceptance of others. All students have developed a stronger sense of self, a new appreciation of their own skills and accomplishments, and all have learned to value themselves and others as unique individuals. The teachers have reported professional

growth, and personal support from each other. Teachers have also reported that administrative support has helped to facilitate their collaborative teaching relationships. This has led to reduced student-teacher ratios, more teacher time and attention, more opportunities for individual student assistance, and enhanced teacher motivation. Overall, the organization has become more sensitive to the needs of the inclusive student and the placement of such students in the least restrictive environment.

Further Study

As mentioned previously, the results showed that implementing inclusion within a collaborative teaching framework at the sixth grade level proved ineffective for 57% of the students in social studies, 33% of the students in science, 48% of the students in mathematics, and 53% of the students in language arts. This intern would like to determine the factors that resulted in ineffective implementation.

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