

7-1974

## The Role of Public Institution of Higher Education in Providing Continuing Education For Students Including Those Who Have One Or More Handicaps

Ray L. Jones

*Director, Center on Deafness, California State University-Northridge*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Jones, R. (1974). The Role of Public Institution of Higher Education in Providing Continuing Education For Students Including Those Who Have One Or More Handicaps. *JADARA*, 8(1). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol8/iss1/39>

## THE ROLE OF PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PROVIDING CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE ONE OR MORE HANDICAPS

---

RAY L. JONES, Director, Center on Deafness,  
California State University-Northridge

### Introduction

On the wall of the Allegheny County Soldiers' Memorial in Pittsburgh is the following quotation from Abraham Lincoln:

"The War for the Union is the people's conflict to make certain whether there shall be preserved in this world that form and substance of government the object of which is to remove the obstacles from the pathway of all — to open the avenues of honorable employment for all, and to give to all an unfettered start in the race of life".

In the more than one hundred years since these words were penned minority groups have recognized that the achievement of these goals of "honorable employment for all" and "an unfettered start in the race of life" could be fully achieved only through the provision of quality education. Today the scene is shifting and in the next decade the focus will be placed on obtaining full educational opportunities for handicapped students both in elementary, secondary and in post-secondary education.

### I. State Responsibilities for the Excess Costs of Educating Handicapped Students

In every state there has been developed an extensive network of public tax-supported schools which are open to qualified students beginning at kindergarten and continuing through graduate study. States have also recognized the special needs of handicapped students and usually provide some form of state reimbursement to local districts for the "excess costs" of educating handicapped students in elementary and secondary schools.

Note: The focus of this paper has been deliberately placed on the role of the *public* institution of higher education in providing continuing education for its students. It is assumed that:

- (a) All students desiring to benefit from continuing education (including those who are handicapped) are citizens who meet normal criteria for admission.
- (b) The term "continuing education" encompasses the gamut of educational opportunities offered for adult learning — ranging from non-credit off-campus programs to formal studies up to and including the doctoral level.

At the college level, however, responsibility for meeting the "excess costs" of educating handicapped students seems to have been left largely to State Departments of Rehabilitation.

## PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

---

Since the education of handicapped clients may extend over four to six years the combination of these costs for all clients that could profit from higher education far exceeds the funds available to the Department of Rehabilitation. The result is the inevitable "rationing" of resources by accepting only the most promising clients (approximately 1 out of ten) to receive college support.

This problem could be alleviated if provisions were made for states to reimburse colleges and universities for the "excess costs" of the education-related support services required by handicapped students. This would leave the Department of Welfare (SSI) and the Department of Rehabilitation providing only those services which are required to "maintain" the client in school.

Institutions which serve handicapped students from neighboring states or in some cases from across the nation should receive similar reimbursement but from Federal sources.

### II. Deterrents to Higher Education for Handicapped Students

Dr. Ray Barsch, a nationally recognized authority in the field of special education, has identified the following as major handicaps which tend to limit the number of handicapped students entering higher education.

(1) *Attitudinal barriers* of paternalism and low expectations. These are perpetuated by a society which tends to regard the handicapped individual as a "non-person" — inferior to normal individuals and not capable of competitive employment, but best suited for sheltered workshop employment. Too often paternalism and low expectations are perpetuated by professionals in public agencies established to "serve" the handicapped.

(2) *Financial barriers*. These are often erected by "professionals" who promote the thinking that education of handicapped students can only be successful when carried out in a special school with unlimited funding and a full complement of highly specialized instructors and resource personnel. Too often they would discourage efforts to serve handicapped students in regular higher-education settings.

(3) *Architectural barriers*. These are very real and exist on almost every campus in America today. The situation is improving as new architectural standards now require that all public buildings be accessible to the physically handicapped individual. However, it will be many years before all college and university buildings will be fully accessible to handicapped students.

A fourth barrier of "*being educationally disadvantaged*," has been identified by Leonard Eaton, poster boy for Cerebral Palsy in 1950, who made the following statement regarding this tragic barrier:

"It is obvious that in giving the handicapped student separate and unequal treatment society is saddling him with an educational disability to add to his physical one — much of the argument which led to the outlawing of racial segregation in the school could be applied in the case of the handicapped. To be treated as inferior makes one feel inferior, and unfortunately leads to inferiority. Just as the black man developed his caste system based on the degree of blackness, so the handicapped students develop a caste system based on the degree of disability. The more disabled you are, the worse (less capable) you are."

This tragic "under-education" of handicapped students is also confirmed by Dr. Tim Nugent of the University of Illinois who reports that in his years of working with handicapped students he has seen many valedictorians from special schools for the handicapped fail in their first year in the University. Students who have been given "A" grades — but who have not been given the basic educational skills required for success in higher education.

## PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

---

### III. Admissions Procedures which Discriminate against the Handicapped Student

Non-handicapped students applying for admission to a university are required to meet a single set of established criteria. (Usually an acceptable grade point average and certain scores on standard entrance examination tests.)

The handicapped student seeking admission to the same university must not only meet these same University criteria, but in addition must meet the far more stringent criteria of the Community Agency upon which he must depend for maintenance and nominal support services he may require to function successfully in the classroom.

In one state the number of rehabilitation clients being sponsored in college programs is reported as approximately 10% of the total clients being served. This means that only one out of ten rehabilitation clients is approved for college while approximately 40-50% of non-handicapped in the same age group would be expected to be in college.

Some of the unrealistic and discriminatory barriers which agencies serving the handicapped have set include the following:

(1) The requirement that handicapped students must have assurance of being employed in their chosen field before a program of studies will be authorized.

Dr. Richard Kinney (who is both deaf and blind) says of this practice:

"We would be in error to consider college for qualified deaf-blind persons from the vocational standpoint only, insisting that a cut and dried guarantee of employment be produced as part of the college entrance exam, so to speak. How many unhandicapped freshmen have such a guarantee as they enter school? From the funding point of view we can only judge that further education would or would not enhance the life satisfaction and contributive opportunities for the particular deaf-blind person."

This point of view leads to the familiar chicken and egg thinking. We can't educate the handicapped client because there is no assurance of employment — and since there are no handicapped clients trained for service in a given field of course they cannot be successfully employed in that field.

Ten years of experience of educating deaf students at the graduate level at CSUN give evidence that the cycle can be broken and that qualified and well trained deaf graduates can find professional employment in their chosen fields on a competitive basis with hearing persons.

(2) Other practices of community agencies which tend to discourage the handicapped student include:

(a) Requiring that client must carry a full academic load each semester and complete their training in four years.

(b) Requiring handicapped students to obtain counselor approval before dropping courses or changing their academic objective.

(c) Withdrawal of agency support if passing grades are not maintained.

(d) Requiring grade and attendance reports from clients.

(e) Denying clients the opportunity of attending summer school or extension classes by withholding agency support.

(f) Agency regulations which discourage students from accepting summer employment, work-study experience, or taking off a semester or two to get meaningful work experience.

### IV. Arguments for and against Providing Higher Education for Handicapped Students

Ms. Pat Pringle, a graduate student at the University of Southern California summarizes the major arguments for and against providing higher education for handicapped students in a project entitled "Where Do They Go?"

**PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

---

*Against*

- “(1) It would cost too much with small guarantee of return.
- (2) It would force facilities to be used which the able bodied can better and more profitably use.
- (3) There is no promise that the severely disabled will get a job even with a degree.
- (4) The value of higher education is becoming less clear for all students.
- (5) Further education may enrich a severely disabled person’s life to an extent that he may never be able to fully use his education and he may turn out to be more frustrated than enriched. . .”

*For*

- “(1) The social interaction of handicapped and non-handicapped students is mutually enriching.
- (2) Higher education provides access to professional and para-professional occupations, and through this to change public attitudes towards the handicapped.
- (3) Higher education makes it possible for disabled to leave welfare rolls and to be economically self-sufficient.
- (4) Education can be justified for education’s sake. Exposure to knowledge, beauty and good can make for a better individual and thus a happier society.”

**V. Four Court Cases Establishing the Right to Education for Minority and Handicapped Students**

The following court cases establish precedents which directly relate to the education of severely handicapped and multiply-handicapped individuals:

(1) In “Brown vs. Board of Education” the court emphasized the critical importance of education both to children and to the general public.

“Today education is perhaps the most important function of state and local government — it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust professionally to his environment. In these days it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity where the state has untaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all children.”

(2) The “Philadelphia Case” (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1971) establishes: (a) that education of handicapped children is not an act of philanthropy, but a constitutionally mandated right, and (b) that all handicapped children are capable of learning and are entitled to education.

(3) The “Washington D.C. Case” (Mills vs. Board of Education of the District of Columbia 1972, and Shapiro vs. Thompson) establish that the absence of money is no defense to deliver rights (including education) as required by the Constitution.

(4) The recent “San Francisco Case” affirms that education in a language the child does not understand is not education. One alternative suggested by the courts is that children be taught in their mother tongue. The findings in this case would appear to affirm that deaf children of deaf parents whose first language is the language of signs should be taught in that language.

**VI. Emerging Developments Which Favor Higher Education for Handicapped Students**

In addition to court cases establishing that education (at all levels) is not a privilege, but a right for all students (including those who are severely handicapped)

## PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

---

there are a number of emerging developments which are giving visibility and support to the provision of higher education for handicapped citizens. These include:

(1) The example of such handicapped (deaf-blind) students as: Jackie Coker who completed her BA degree at the University of the Pacific; Richard Kenney, who graduated Summa cum Laude from Mt. Union College; Robert Smithdas who completed his BA degree at St. Johns cum Laude and his MA degree at New York University.

These individuals are demonstrating that they can not only succeed in higher education, but can be successfully employed upon completion of training. Somewhere in the schools serving multi-handicapped students today are potential Helen Kellers, Richard Kenneys, Jackie Cokers, Bob Smithdas'. There is an urgency to identify the potential of such students and to give them the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

(2) Universities have found that they can successfully serve the disadvantaged minority student and under the leadership of "educational statesmen" some universities are taking steps to expand their services to handicapped students.

(3) Well educated and vocal handicapped individuals are moving into key leadership positions in both public and government service. In these positions they are speaking out on behalf of the handicapped in demanding improved services and greater educational opportunities.

(4) Congressional leaders are becoming increasingly sensitive to the needs of severely handicapped citizens. In recent legislation they are mandating that funds be utilized to serve the severely handicapped citizen instead of going to the less handicapped individual who represents a "quick closure" for the counselor.

(5) On campuses throughout the nation handicapped students are organizing and demonstrating effective leadership in giving visibility to handicapped students and in obtaining improved services from the Universities.

(6) A number of national agencies are joining forces in pressing class action lawsuits which establish the rights of severely and multiply-handicapped individuals to an education. These agencies include the National Center for Law and the Handicapped at South Bend, Indiana; the National Center for Legal Rights of the Deaf at Detroit, Michigan; the Council for Exceptional Children and the Easter Seal Society.

(7) Recent Federal Legislation extends the "civil rights clause" in government contracts to prohibit discrimination against those who may be handicapped. Violation of this clause by refusing to accept a handicapped student could jeopardize all Federal funds going to a University.

(8) Current Federal legislation is mandating that a portion of appropriated funds for such grant programs as Vocational Education, Higher Education, and RSA must go to serve handicapped and severely handicapped individuals.

(9) An increasing number of states are re-assessing the "education of children with handicapping conditions" and are developing statements of policy or "Master Plans" which extend the right to education to severely handicapped and multi-handicapped individuals for whom this service is not now available. While these are addressed primarily to the needs of "children" — it is just a matter of time until the higher education needs of the handicapped will be brought into focus by such studies.

(10) Non-handicapped persons who for the first time are associating with severely handicapped individuals are beginning to vocalize the tragedy of their own "segregated" education which has denied them the experience of getting to know, to understand and to appreciate the capabilities of handicapped friends.

(11) Your presence in this meeting today is perhaps the most heart-warming and encouraging evidence that each of you feel that severely handicapped deaf citizens are entitled to and can profit from continuing and higher education. Each of you will be

**PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

---

serving as advocates for the right of severely handicapped deaf citizens to achieve their full potential through continuing education.

As we leave this conference and return to our homes throughout the nation, God grant us the vision to see the potential of our severely handicapped associates and the strength and determination to work and to fight (if necessary) to "Open the Avenues of Honorable Employment and to Give to All an Unfettered Start in the Race of Life."

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Abeson, Alan. *A Continuing Summary of Pending and Completed Litigation Regarding the Education of Handicapped Children*. Reston, Virginia: Council for Exceptional Children, 1973.

Blake, Daniel R. *The Case of NLTP. Some Indications of the Productivity of Specialized Masters Programs*. Bureau of Business Services and Research. California State University, Northridge.

Eaton, Leonard. *Segregation of the Handicapped. Accent on Living*, 1970.

Edwards, Newton. *The Courts and the Public Schools*. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Gilhool, Thomas K. Education: An Inalienable Right. *Exceptional Children*, 1973, May, 597-609.

Jones, Ray L. New Vistas for Competitive Employment of Deaf Persons. *The Deaf American*, 1967, November, 6-8.

Rodham, Hillary. Children Under the Law. *Harvard Educational Review*, 1973, 4, 487-514.

Weintraub, Frederick J. *State Law and Education of Handicapped Children: Issues and Recommendations*. The Council of Exceptional Children, 1972.

American Profile: *What States Are Doing (and can do) To Hire The Handicapped*. Washington, D.C.: The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, 1971.

*The Education of Children With Handicapping Conditions*. Albany, New York: The State Education Department, 1973.

Campus Concern — The Disabled Students. *Wisconsin Alumni*, 1973, March.