

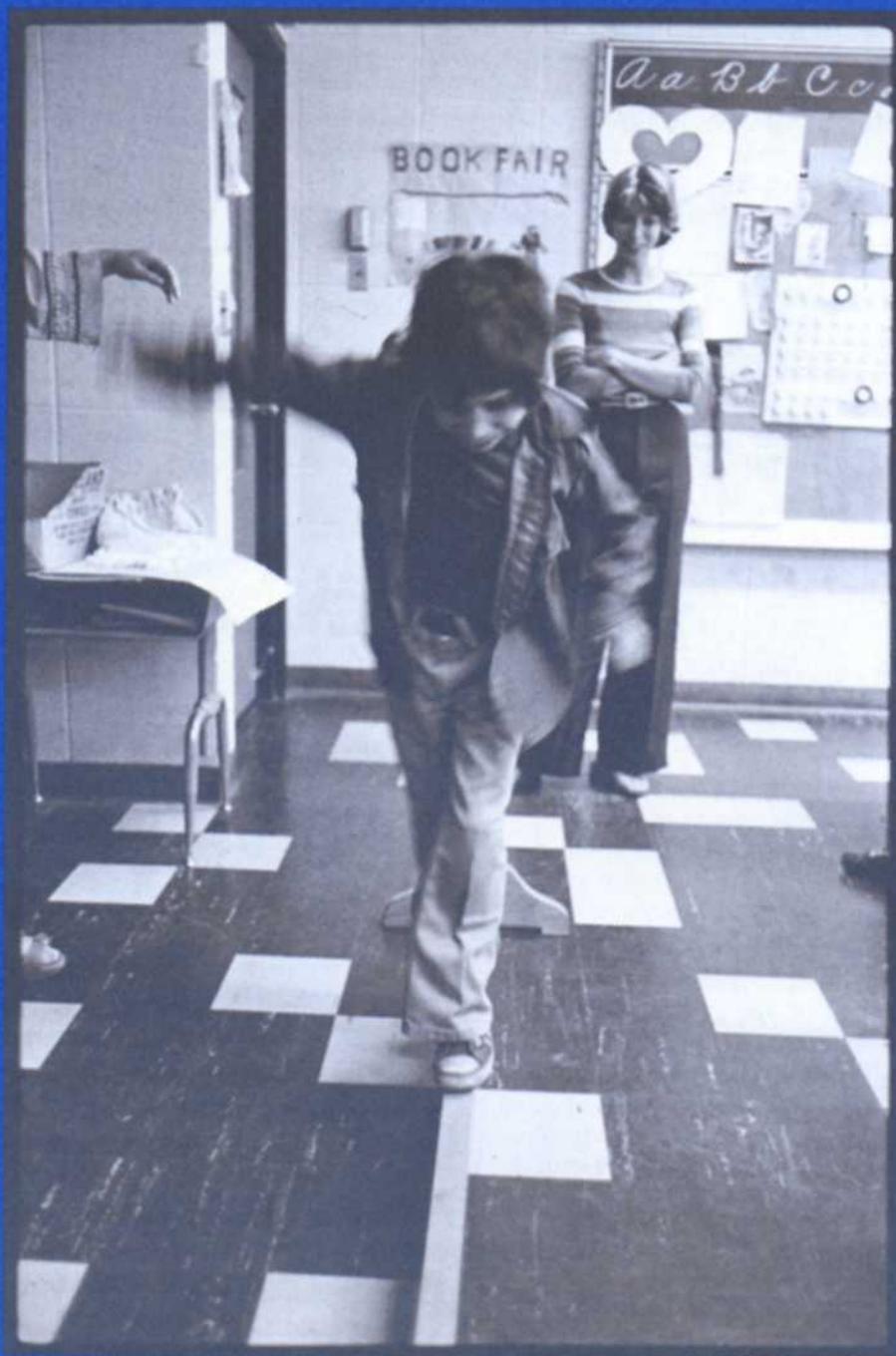
children with disabilities/practical guidance

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Mainstreaming, Part 1

Special Education Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow:

An interview with Frances Connor, Samuel Kirk and Burton Blatt

Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, is the most significant law affecting children with disabilities yet passed in the United States. THE EXCEPTIONAL PARENT invited three outstanding special educators to put the law in perspective. By virtue of their long experience and their devotion to children with disabilities, Frances Connor, Samuel Kirk and Burton Blatt are uniquely qualified to discuss the past, present and future of special education.

Key to participants: BB—Burton Blatt, FC—Frances Connor and SK—Samuel Kirk.



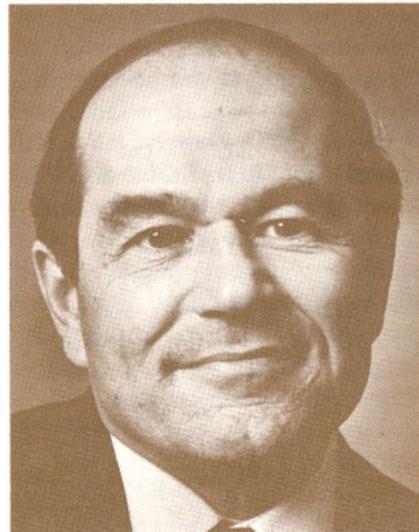
Frances Connor, Ed.D., is Chairman, Department of Special Education, Teachers College, Columbia University and Director, Research and Demonstration Center for Education of the Handicapped.

As a member of important national and local organizations she has had a long time commitment to disabled children. Her teaching, research and public and organizational service have influenced the methods of training teachers and educating disabled children.



Samuel A. Kirk, Ph.D., is Professor of Special Education, University of Arizona and Professor Emeritus, University of Indiana.

A pioneer in the field of special education and mental retardation, his extensive research, teaching and organizational activity have shaped the state of the field in which he has worked. Taking time off from his busy research and teaching career, he was the first director of the Division of Handicapped Children and Youth, U.S. Office of Education, the forerunner of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Among his many honorary awards was the First International Award in Mental Retardation from the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation for professional service in mental retardation.



Burton Blatt, Ed.D., is Dean of the School of Education and Centennial Professor at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

His immense energy is reflected in the range of his activities: educational administrator, researcher, teacher, novelist, consultant to state and federal governments, organizational leader. He combines the eye and intelligence of the best investigative journalist with the heart of the profound optimist. His personality and activity have made an impact on all who have met or worked with him.

Dr. Blatt is a member of The Exceptional Parent Editorial Advisory Board.

We first asked our three experts to introduce themselves and to describe their ideas about how education for children with disabilities has changed over the years.

BB: I am Burton Blatt. In 1949 I was a teacher of English and social studies in a public school in New York City. I became interested in what were then referred to as CRMD classes, programs for children with retarded mental development, taking opportunities to observe special classes. My interest became more pronounced, so I accepted a position as teacher of a wide age-range class. I had a group of about 15 children from the ages of about six to about 17 or 18. The children stayed with me all the years of their schooling. So I knew some of those children six and seven years, and I knew their families. I used to visit the family, sit down around the kitchen table and have wine with the mother and father. They were from a very stable, low-income neighborhood in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, one of the ethnic neighborhoods that you read about. Most of them were children who you would now call culturally deprived, and a few were what might be called minimal brain damaged. They were indistinguishable from other children before they entered school and they were indistinguishable as soon as they left school.

FC: I began as an English and social studies teacher in 1942 at the New York State Rehabilitation Hospital. At the same time I was working in the community on home instruction programs during lunch. I would go into town and do home teaching. And in most instances the children were cerebral palsied. They were considered the very retarded kids and were absolutely excluded from school.

... we are an underdeveloped country
in preschool education.

A parents' organization had not been established, but we had a few aggressive parents who said, "Maybe something can be done with them." I owe such a debt of gratitude as a special educator to the parents in New York City. They were the ones who worked on the Association for Retarded Citizens, and they were the ones who got United Cerebral Palsy established. We would not have the kind of programs we have if it were not for them.

UCP parents started to get together, and they asked me for some help for their kids. Then they asked me to leave the hospital and to work with them in the establishment of a new program for cerebral palsy children in space made available in Suffern High School.

One of the reasons, I think, they asked me was that I had gotten into a major battle with the medical director of a rehabilitation hospital and with the parents of kids who were orthopedically handicapped. The polio kids were clean youngsters, essentially recognized as fairly bright. They could walk (or if they did not walk they used braces and crutches and wheelchairs), they could talk, they looked normal. The c.p. kids were flipping around all over the corridors. They were considered a contaminating factor by the parents of the polio kids. These parents did not want their children emulating the speech or the walking patterns of the kids. They knew the c.p. kids were "retarded," although I kept saying they were not. The parents had stormed the office of the director saying they did not want those c.p. kids in the hospital. The battle was fought. We won and the c.p. kids came in. The parents remembered this

and asked me to help set up the school program.

We had a lot of the parents coming in from New York City. Their children were not eligible for admission to the city schools because the city required an IQ of 70 in order to attend Board of Education classes. In the Suffern High School we had youngsters with whom I had worked on home instruction who had measurable IQs of 13 and 15. The families from the city moved businesses and gave up great advantages to send their children to this program.

I would like to support what Burt has said about working with parents. At that time we called parents by their first names, and they called us by our first names. We knew them well.

We knew what the homes looked like, and the families knew what our homes looked like. We discovered that when c.p. youngsters came to workshops and recreation facilities they did not know how to act. They could not get away from their parents. Although they were adults most of them were living with their families; even when they got married they would continue to live with one of their families. They were not allowed to grow up. And I do not think that has changed yet.

I see college students, even graduate students who are physically disabled. They are beautifully equipped in many ways. However, socially they are still children. I would like to propose that we do a great deal more in preparing them for the kinds of roles that they have to play. They are fighting for rights, but they are failing because they do not know how to deal with other people. I would like to propose that we consider the

psychodynamic aspect of growing up as a part of schooling. The early schooling of handicapped youngsters is inadequate. We are not giving them the tools that they need for the educational and career opportunities which are now opening up for them. **SK:** My initial introduction to the field was in 1929. I had a bachelor's degree in psychology and was working on my master's when I obtained a job as an attendant in an institution for mentally retarded delinquents near Chicago. I was not prepared by training to teach but I did take a course from Wallace Walker on handicapped children one summer. It was the only course on special education that I had ever had for credit. My background in physiological psychology, experimental psychology and learning helped me in my teaching.

To begin I shall try to diagnose the situation in special education in the last 10 or 15 years. My impression is that special education has had, to some extent, a detrimental effect on elementary education. I think, too, that obtaining funds for special education has also been, to some extent, detrimental, because we sometimes begin to rely on money to solve problems.

In the 1930s I was training teachers in Wisconsin. At that time no one could be assigned to a class for the mentally retarded whose IQ was above 69. That is what I thought was the definition of mental retardation.

As a result, the elementary teachers of that day had a broad concept of normalcy, from an IQ of 70 to 170. That range was the job of the elementary teacher. As a matter of fact half of my time at the teacher's college in Milwaukee in the 1930s was devoted to training elementary teachers in remedial reading, and in handling minor problems of handicapped children in the regular grades. After World War

II, and with heavy state subsidies for classes for the mentally retarded, the IQ criterion of mental retardation went up to 70 and 80. Then the American Association on Mental Deficiency defined mental retardation as an 84 or below IQ. For directors of special education that was a boon, because now they could organize many classes for the mentally retarded. A larger proportion of minority children—blacks, Indians and Mexican-Americans—began to fill up the special classes.

Because of the reaction of minority groups to the large proportion of their children being assigned to special classes, educators looked for a solution, and AAMD revised its definition and reduced the criterion from an IQ of 84 to an IQ of 68 or 69 and below. Nationally we have reverted to the definition Wisconsin had in the twenties and thirties.

What are we now doing with the children between 68 and 84? We are "mainstreaming" them. What were we doing before we raised the IQ level to 84? They were in the regular classes. My contention is that we are mainstreaming the children that never should have been in the special classes in the first place. What we are doing today is a corrective measure for our sins of the past two or three decades. In the last few decades elementary teachers have relied on special education teachers to relieve them of difficult children. Earlier students of elementary education were prepared to do remedial work with handicapped children. Teachers came to school earlier to do remedial work between eight and nine, before the other children came. They also helped some children after school. They were trained to do that kind of job. Today we are trying to re-educate the elementary teacher to do what the 1920s and 1930s teachers did.

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BB: We should not lose sight of one thing. The reason special education was given so much encouragement to accept responsibility for children with 75 and 80 and 85 IQs was because there were many such children who sat in classes and learned very little. Although they were physically present, they were psychologically and pedagogically segregated and neglected. Maybe with this new law there is going to be more than a correction of the past errors; maybe we will do it better than in the past.

SK: Yes, I think it may be better than in the past. I think the other element that helped create the present problems in special education was the great shortage of elementary teachers after the war. What happened was that universities which had never trained elementary teachers went into elementary education with their current faculties. The tradition in universities was to promote on the basis of research and publications, not for teacher training. After this started, teachers' colleges tended to abandon their traditional role of teacher training and became universities. By making teachers' colleges universities we eliminated one of the powerful organizations concerned with the development of better teachers.

So the goals changed, and as a result elementary education training decreased in quality. We had all these summer-school courses in elementary for certification—getting Mrs. Jones to come back and take a course or two. We flooded the schools with special education teachers. It used to be different.

The first student I graduated, in 1937 out of teachers' college, went to South Milwaukee, and organized a class for the mentally handicapped. It consisted of teaching these children in a special class, but putting them with the elementary classes part

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of the day. The special teacher also tutored normal children who were retarded in reading, spelling or arithmetic. Now we call that organization a resource room.

Implementing P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, will require large amounts of money. The source of these funds is a major concern among educators. Many are worried that there will be a diversion of funds from current programs rather than additional money. Our experts next discussed some of the economic implications of this legislation.

FC: I am terribly concerned over the fact that most of the teachers who are being laid off are the young, enthusiastic and competent teachers—the most recently hired. So therefore, all too often the ones who remain are being reassigned to special education positions. They are the teachers who have been on the job for a long time. They are not prepared to teach disabled children, and often they really could care less. They are among those who have excluded children from their regular grades, and put them in special classes. They are the ones who have excluded kids with behavioral problems or who did not learn easily.

With the economic crunch we are now crowding them back into schools in classes that are far too large for them, because we cannot afford to have the special services. We are dropping the supportive services of the resource room, itinerant teacher, consultants of various kinds. This is not what "mainstreaming" or "least restrictive environment" is

supposed to be.

SK: The economic problem is a state of mind. We talk about spending \$90 billion for a B-1 bomber; we traditionally offer billions of dollars for bombs, guns, ships and military equipment. I do not know why, for example, Taiwan should have universal education for four-year-old children while the United States cannot afford it.

FC: In New York state, except for the deaf and blind, handicapped kids are not to be in school until age five!

SK: I know; that is because of the economic factor. Because we are an underdeveloped country in preschool education.

BB: P.L. 94-142 can make a difference in many ways. It is landmark legislation, and it is not only going to deal with the handicapped, but it is going to have tremendous implications for the nonhandicapped. You talk about an individual program plan; pretty soon parents of ordinary children are going to say, "That is good for my kid. Why can't my child follow an individual program plan?"

FC: They are already asking that. And the money is there.

BB: The money is necessary, but it is not enough. And there is one thing that people do not realize, even with the \$3.1 billion that may be appropriated by 1982. There will always be a discrepancy between needs and resources. There must always be, but as Sam said and Frances said, there are psychological problems within each of us, and there are problems of intent and motivation which are much more important than the money. Money is not going to root out the prejudice.

FC: I think 25 years ago people like us were saying, "We will get that child in." We would get the program for the spina bifida child, find out how to take care of the problems of incontinence. We would make sure that he could use his crutches or his wheelchair. We would make sure he got some medical attention. We would have little ramps built for almost nothing, so that the youngster could get into the school. We would have someone come in to change his diapers if that is what he needed. It would be done in the school because the school was a part of the community.

BB: The question we have in special education is not, how are we going to get those "rotten teachers" to teach. What we have to ask is, how can people who have enjoyed the benefits of this country and have had education, who have done so many wonderful things—how can they

turn away from including all children in their schools? How do we make the schools work? When the parents are told the truth, when the parents of the ordinary child learn the truth about the handicapped, they are going to open up the schools to these children. But you have got to go to those people, and you have got to talk with them—you have got to show them.

F.C.: We have got to move into a systematic effort of persuasion. Endless law suits and being at loggerheads with unions will not work. Education of all handicapped children is mandated, and we have got to provide it in the most appropriate way. These children are human beings who are here. Children go to school, and the special child is a regular human being who just happens to be a little different.

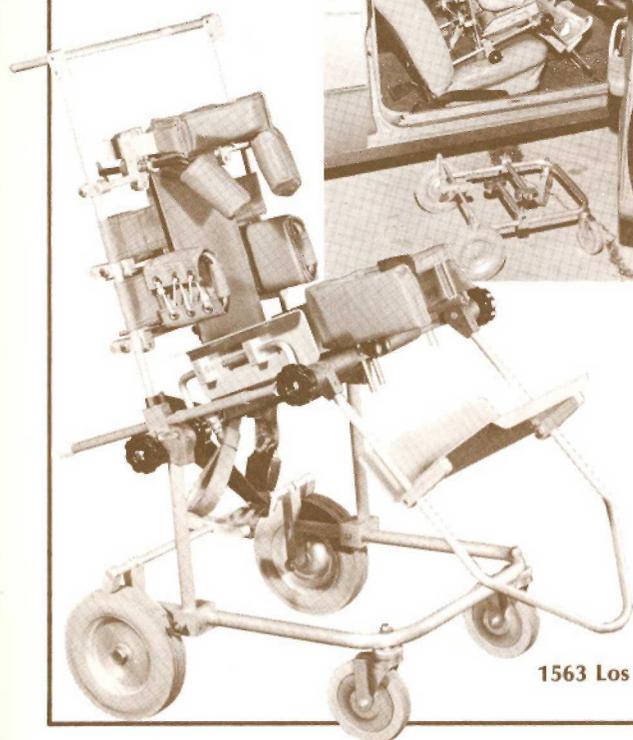
We can make a child look more like other children in some instances. However, most of the

disabled children you see in a public school, even in some of the special programs, do not really look that different from other children. They might move differently, they might function differently. But as people see what they can do, those youngsters are going to be accepted.

We need to give people an opportunity to see disabled children function at the best level they can master. And we have to gradually assist. I think we can relinquish our maternal/paternal watching over these youngsters really quite quickly. But that, to me, is the next step.

94-142 is not going to be the panacea. It is not going to give us the necessary money. New York state will get \$70 for a child if the appropriation is available. It is estimated that since fiscal responsibility will be turned over to the local schools, it will cost the local schools an average of a

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thousand dollars for each one of the entering handicapped children.

At the present time the local school districts, which are having their budgets turned down one after another, are not going to be able to cope with this additional expense. Some of our programs in early education are being threatened by P.L. 94-142. Money that has been spent on early childhood education will probably have to be spent on those new disabled populations coming in to the schools who are of school age. As a result the early childhood programs are in jeopardy; many will close.

I have talked with leadership in both the Association for Retarded Children and United Cerebral Palsy, for example, and they are beginning to retool to work on early childhood education programs for their kids. A few years ago, when schools were assuming responsibility, they

were shifting from preschoolers to focus on their adult populations. They have said, "Let's work with those older ones, get them in the community. We've got to be concerned about where they're going to reside, we've got to get them out of this infantile behavior pattern." And now all of a sudden, I see a giant step backwards. They are getting prepared to provide early childhood education.

BB: When similar laws were passed in Florida and other states, they literally had bounty hunters going from school district to school district to identify children for reimbursement. I did a study a couple of years ago for O.C.D. on the effects of the 1972 Headstart legislation, which required that 10 percent of all children in Headstart had to be handicapped. Well, O.C.D. did its mail survey, and they found

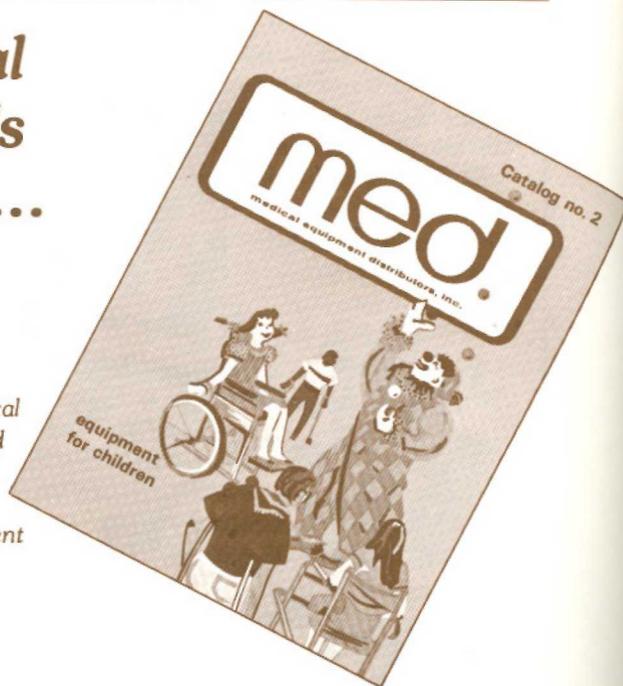
11 percent were handicapped. We went into about 60 or 70 programs throughout the country from Alaska to Puerto Rico, and we sent in observers and looked at records and examined teachers and kids and interviewed people. We found that the majority of those children were relabeled children, children who would have been in Headstart, who had a pair of glasses or had a hearing aid or had this or that, and now they are called retarded and blind, deaf and what have you. They were excluding severely and multiply handicapped children from the Headstart as much as they always were.

In the second part of the interview our experts discuss the potential for a backlash against children with disabilities because of P.L. 94-142. They discuss strategies for dealing with the backlash problem as well as how to make implementation of the law effective.

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